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an introduction to

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

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

AN INTRODUCTION TO WELCOMING SCHOOLS



In the last decade we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of children adopted or born into families headed by lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents. At the same time, the 2000 census also reflects that just 25 percent of children in the U.S. are being raised in households headed by a married, heterosexual couple.

Given the landscape of diverse family structures, it is deeply important that all children attend schools in which they learn to appreciate and respect human differences, and see their own families reflected in the tapestry of the diverse school community.

Welcoming Schools is an innovative program for administrators, educators, and parents/guardians who want to strengthen their schools' approach to family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying, and help prepare this and future generations of children to live in an increasingly diverse society. And it is one of few resources available to elementary schools that is inclusive of LGBT families and individuals.

The cornerstone of this program, the *Welcoming Schools Guide*, is based on research that shows links between academic achievement, emotional well-being and an inclusive school climate. *Welcoming Schools* is currently being evaluated in 13 schools in three different states. We are encouraged by the findings from the first year of this pilot (summarized in the Appendix) and by the high level of interest among educators, administrators and parents/guardians from across the country.

An Introduction to Welcoming Schools is a primer for any member of a school community who wants to learn more about the core elements of *Welcoming Schools*, prepare their school for implementation of the full program, or to create opportunities to have productive conversations about fully inclusive schools. The four sections of this *Introduction – Why Welcoming Schools?*, Creating Caring School Community, Connecting with Colleagues – Learning Together, Resources and Bibliographies – are described on the next page. In addition to reviewing the materials in this publication, I encourage you to also take advantage of our expanded online resources at www.welcomingschools.org – some of these resources are also linked to within this *Introduction*. These links have the text “[PDF]” next to them.

We are honored to present *An Introduction to Welcoming Schools* to your school community, and eager to support your efforts to ensure that your school community reflects the reality of our changing world by embracing and affirming all children and all families.

Sincerely,

Ellen Kahn
Director, HRC Family Project

WHY WELCOMING SCHOOLS?

An overview of the *Welcoming Schools Guide* and why welcoming schools are important for *all* students; where to begin when working toward a welcoming school environment; how to respond to concerns that arise when including LGBT-headed families and anti-gay name-calling in curricula, relevant research on inclusive, welcoming school communities; and connecting *Welcoming Schools* to curriculum standards of national education associations.

CREATING CARING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Begin by assessing where you are now. This section includes a short school climate assessment that can help you determine what the first steps should be. It also includes many suggestions of steps you can take based on your particular role in the school community.

CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES — LEARNING TOGETHER — TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Training is a necessary first step to building a more welcoming school. This section includes sample training for the beginning of this process as well as one-page handouts to help you answer students when they ask, “What does gay mean?” or how to respond when you hear students using gay slurs.

RESOURCES

These resources support you in your effort to create a more welcoming school. Review supportive laws, how *Welcoming Schools* lessons help students meet learning standards and resolutions from national educational associations that support this work, and advice for speaking to the media.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

These will help you build your collection of diverse books inclusive of all kinds of families, books to help students handle bullying and hurtful teasing, and books that help kids discuss gender roles. Also included here is a list for adults interested in learning more about the LGBT community.

APPENDIX

An overview of all the resources available from *Welcoming Schools*, a summary of the evaluation of the program in its first year, information about the authors and HRC Family project and acknowledgements from the *Welcoming Schools* team.

WHY WELCOMING SCHOOLS?

THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE

The *Welcoming Schools Guide* is a comprehensive resource that facilitates the creation of fully inclusive, respectful and supportive elementary school environments for all students and their families. *Welcoming Schools* is ideally implemented as a program with a clear starting point and the long-term goal of sustainable institutional change that occurs when all members of the school community — from the principal to the parents, the playground monitors to the school counselor, the classroom teachers to bus drivers — have a shared commitment to the principles and practices identified in *Welcoming Schools*, and act every day to uphold them.

Creation of the *Welcoming Schools Guide* was initiated by a group of educators and parents seeking to meet the needs of students whose families are often not reflected in school curricula. A broad range of educators and parents reviewed the guide extensively during its development, and provided other models of “welcoming schools” practices that exist in theirs and other schools. The result of this extensive writing process yielded one of the few resources for elementary schools that addresses the problems of anti-gay slurs and is inclusive of LGBT-headed families.

The guide is inclusive of all kinds of families and addresses multiple forms of bias-based bullying, especially in the lesson plans for students. At the same time, the materials in the guide intended for adults have an intentional emphasis on including LGBT-headed families and children who don’t conform to gender norms, as well as addressing anti-gay name-calling and bullying. Few resources



exist to help educators address these topics in schools and this guide is a resource to help fill this gap. The lives of children and families can only be fully affirmed when the full diversity of the members of our school communities are named and included. Therefore, this guide includes diversity related to race, religion, family structure, socioeconomic status, national origin and physical ability.

The *Welcoming Schools Guide* is based on research that shows links among academic achievement, social-emotional well-being and an inclusive school climate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE ARE TO HELP SCHOOLS:

- Improve school climate so that all students and families feel safe and welcome
- Increase family involvement
- Improve students’ academic achievement
- Teach respect and diversity that includes LGBT topics in the context of the full range of diversity in our schools

THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE REFLECTS A COMMITMENT TO THESE BASIC PREMISES:

- Elementary school students' families are central to their understanding of who they are.
- All students should feel that they and their families are included and valued in their school community.
- Students learn more effectively when they see themselves (and therefore, their families) reflected in the curriculum.
- Including a range of family structures when families are discussed helps ensure that no child feels either left out or singled out and that all children feel welcome.
- Pressure to conform to gender roles can limit students' social and academic development.
- Name-calling and bullying have a negative impact on the social and academic development of all involved: targets, perpetrators and bystanders.
- Hurtful, bias-based name-calling and bullying occur in elementary schools, including words and actions which are anti-gay. Effective intervention requires

- both naming and understanding these biases.
- Research shows significant associations between students' perception of teacher/school support and their academic performance.

PRINCIPLE CONTENT AREAS OF WELCOMING SCHOOLS

The Welcoming Schools Guide focuses on three areas linked to academic learning, school climate and family involvement:

Family Diversity: The guide outlines school- and community-based strategies to welcome students from a variety of families, including families headed by LGBT parents, single parents, foster parents, grandparents, etc.

Gender Stereotyping: Students who do not adhere to traditional gender roles are often targeted for harassment — even in early elementary school grades — and stereotypes can constrict children's academic and social successes. The guide addresses ways in which children are pressured to conform to gender roles and stereotypes, and strategies for change.

Name Calling: Hurtful teasing, name-calling and bullying affect everyone: targets, perpetrators and bystanders. The guide takes a systemic approach to school change, providing tools to engage all members of the school community through parent involvement, faculty

education and classroom strategies.

WHAT MAKES A WELCOMING CLASSROOM?

welcome means like you feel like you're loved

welcome means like you don't feel sad, you feel good at school

welcome means speaking to me, they're near me

welcome means ok to come here

welcome means it's like you can come and follow

welcome means it's like you come to me and all will be well

welcome means like something to make them [new kids] happy

welcome means if they speak a new language, come and speak to them

welcome means they feel good and they don't want to be anywhere else

- First grade students from a California pilot site

CREATING WELCOMING SCHOOLS: GETTING STARTED

“Schools may hesitate for fear of creating opposition, but parents found the conversation [about Welcoming Schools] with friends at school helpful to implementation.”

- Educator from a California pilot site

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

- The **importance of groundwork** cannot be overestimated when addressing family diversity, gender stereotypes, name-calling and bullying.
- Consider what level of support there is among the parent/guardian community, the administration and the teachers.
 - Do you need to hold events in your school community on family diversity or bullying and name-calling?
 - Do you need to hold events in your school community to build community where everyone feels welcome?
 - Do you need to have more one-on-one conversations with parents and guardians? Teachers? Administrators?
- Talk with the school board/committee about the importance of inclusive and welcoming schools for all students' education.

Creating a safe and welcoming school takes many people, from administrators to educators and staff to parents and guardians. The following are keys to success in this important work:

- Work with others. Find support in the school community.
- As an educator, find support by talking with your colleagues, administrators and parents.
- As a parent or guardian talk with other parents/guardians, with the PTO/PTA, with teachers and administrators, and with the school board/committee.
- Be willing to have lots of conversations!

FAMILY FORUM AT CALIFORNIA PILOT SCHOOL

At a family forum at one of the California pilot schools, 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.”

- Work with an existing committee/organization in your school, or form one to develop ideas and plans for your school community. A committee or task force in the school can help implement your ideas and ensure follow-up.
- Work with the administration to ensure support for taking steps to create a more welcoming school.
- Develop an open, positive strategy for your school community.
- Work collaboratively and make the process fit into your school's (or school district's) environment.

IDEAS FOR FIRST STEPS

- Evening events recognizing and celebrating family diversity
 - Help people to see, understand and value the diversity of families in the school and wider community.
 - Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to learn from each other. For example, when parents/guardians or children talk about their diverse families at these events, it helps other parents learn how to talk about diverse families with their own children.
 - Make events fun. Serve food. Engage your community.
- Forums on reducing hurtful teasing and name-calling
 - Ensure that the ways in which children in your school are actually teased are addressed.
 - Bias-based teasing and bullying is common in elementary schools. Look at bullying based on race, anti-gay perceptions, gender, religion, class and body size.
- Professional development on interrupting gender-based or anti-gay name-calling or bullying and ways to respond to students' questions on LGBT-headed families
 - Most educators have no experience talking about LGBT issues with students. Many questions and fears typically arise.
 - Practice and education builds confidence and vocabulary to ensure productive, professional discussions.
- Conversations with administrators about the importance to the students and/or your children of having a safe and welcoming school
 - Does the administration support the philosophy and/or policy of creating a welcoming climate for all students?
 - Does it support taking concrete steps to develop a respectful and safe school?

GATHER INFORMATION

- Sharing real children's and families' stories from your school and community can be effective in explaining why addressing hurtful name-calling and bullying is important.
- Speak with colleagues, including guidance staff, about the experiences they have had in the school related to anti-gay or gender-biased name-calling.
- See if there are parental concerns about children being teased or put on the spot because of their families' structure or children's characteristics.

WORK WITH THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Make sure you understand your administration and school system's position and readiness.
- Research existing school, district and state policies. Determine if they back up your work for welcoming schools or if you need to work for more inclusive policies or laws.

- Find ways that *Welcoming Schools* can be linked to the school's core values, mission statements, policies and protocol. Help others — especially administrators — understand these connections.
- Be aware of the many demands faced by your school. Consider ways that working to create a welcoming school connects with your school or district's other priorities or initiatives.

PREPARE YOURSELF

- Practice how you would answer students' questions about family diversity, gender stereotypes and bullying. Practice how you could intervene in anti-gay name-calling.
- Be prepared to talk about the ways that it is beneficial for students to learn about family diversity, gender stereotypes and bullying.
- Be prepared to talk about how the lessons in *Welcoming Schools* will help students develop skills to meet learning standards in language arts or social studies.
- Attend professional development training and conferences regarding anti-bias frameworks in education, including family diversity, gender identity, LGBT topics in education and bullying. Invite colleagues and community members to attend these events with you.
- Connect with local or regional resources to help you with your work.

CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS

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

Change is a process that takes time and commitment. Be prepared for some setbacks and be creative about ways to move forward.

"When Chery LaVergne and Jen Johnson moved to central Minnesota, they had doubts about sending their granddaughter to the local, rural public schools. But community members encouraged them to give it a try and they have found great success. They encouraged Savannah to talk openly with her classmates and teachers about her unique and loving family.

Before the school year began, LaVergne met with the teacher privately and made sure that the adult relationships focused on in school were not just traditional families. She wanted to make sure that the teacher knew that the most important thing was that her child came from a loving and supportive family.

Savannah has had a positive experience and is thriving in school."

- Rainbow Families Newsletter,
Fall 2006.

WHY DISCUSS FAMILY DIVERSITY, TEASING, NAME-CALLING AND GENDER?

"Imagine how different things could be if [students] were to discover early on that just because somebody's home life is different from theirs doesn't make him or her a bad person. That, quite the opposite, heck, they're just a kid like me."

- From an op-ed in a local paper regarding the implementation of Welcoming Schools at a Massachusetts pilot site.

FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT TO ALL CHILDREN.

Families are children's first place from which they view their world. Children in elementary school 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 schools are not keeping everyone safe.*

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."

- Michael S. Kimmel & Matthew Mahler, "Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia and Violence: Random School Shootings, 1982-2001"

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, children can ask questions and get information to help dispel stereotypes that can lead to insults and physical harassment.

GENDER-EXPANSIVE MESSAGES EMPOWER CHILDREN RATHER THAN LIMIT THEM.

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

WELCOMING SCHOOLS PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND SUCCEED.

Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.² Also, students in schools with a greater sense of community are more academically motivated and have higher educational aspirations.³ They are also more likely to develop social and emotional competencies and enjoy school more.⁴

“The [Welcoming Schools] lessons on when teasing becomes bullying and the differences between allies and bystanders have been particularly helpful this year in dealing with sexualized play being instigated by a 5th-grade boy to the discomfort of some 4th- and 5th-grade girls. The lessons gave my staff a place to begin the conversations about boundaries, advocacy and self respect.”

- Principal from a California pilot site

“I totally agree with all the three categories [family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying] of Welcoming Schools... . Coming from a multi-racial family... I think it’s really important to expose the kids to these things because they don’t always know how to react.”

- Parent from Massachusetts pilot site

RESPONDING TO CONCERNs ABOUT BEING LGBT-INCLUSIVE

"We have a number of [same-sex parents] in this school and I think it isn't talked about. I can recall another school where I had a little boy in kindergarten who talked about having two fathers. I could tell he was really uncomfortable. He started to say he had two dads, and then he stopped [after a peer's reaction] and he didn't know how to deal with it and honestly, I didn't know how to deal with it either."

- Minnesota pilot site educator



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 to intervene when they see or hear name-calling or harassment based on characteristics associated with these categories. We are, after all, America — the melting pot.

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.

When you use materials from the *Welcoming Schools Guide*, issues, concerns and questions may arise in conversations with parents, guardians, administrators or school boards. The topic, in general, may be considered controversial, especially in the context of an elementary learning environment. This section provides ideas on how to discuss concerns or questions that may arise related to being inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

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 resulting 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. On the next page 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. Educators are simply discussing family when they talk about parents or guardians, whether they are LGBT, non-LGBT, adoptive, kinship, single or married.

- Roberto is talking about his family when he talks about visiting his grandparents with his two moms and his 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 a diverse group of children talking about their own families shows many ways that caring adults are raising children.



The resources in the *Welcoming Schools Guide* help students see love for children as the common thread that runs through caring families.

See [Additional Resources Available from Welcoming Schools](#) for lesson plans on understanding and respecting family diversity and [Family Education and Community Building for Your School](#).

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. Many 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.⁵ 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 directly address the kinds of words that students are using. Words like gay, queer or sissy are words that hurt their classmates and friends. In these discussions on name-calling it is respect that is being discussed.

See [Additional Resources Available from Welcoming Schools](#) for lesson plans on creating a respectful school by addressing name-calling and bullying and [What Do You Say to “That’s So Gay?”](#)

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, understand 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 same-sex parents, grandparents or guardians.

- Households headed by same-sex couples are reported in virtually every U.S. county according to the U.S. Census.⁶
- In heavily rural states such as Mississippi, South Dakota and Alaska, same-sex households are more likely to have children than same-sex households in other states.⁷
- In a look at U.S. Census data, approximately two thirds of same-sex Hispanic couples are raising children.⁸
- The California Census data shows that more than half of African-American same-sex couples are raising children.⁹



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 lesbian, gay, 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 "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual" or "transgender" are visible in the context of current events. Students hear them in the news and in other media and in all aspects of their lives. It can only be expected that related questions will arise when they come to school and may take place in conversations and questions in the classroom.

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, efforts to stop put-downs and bullying and exploring 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.

See [Questions Students May Ask and Possible Responses About LGBT People \[PDF\]](#) or [Laws and Policies that Support Welcoming Schools](#).

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; discussion of different kinds of families; or any kind of hurtful 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.

See [Family Education and Community Building for Your School](#) or "[What Does Gay Mean?](#)"

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. Because many core values and beliefs are rooted in religious teachings, it is essential to emphasize that we are not judging or endorsing any one set of beliefs or ideas about family, relationships or behavior in ways that conflict with religious teachings. Rather, we are creating an environment that prepares our children to live peacefully and respectfully in a theologically diverse society.

See [Welcoming Religious Resources \[PDF\]](#).

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 lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Most LGBT people grew up in households headed by heterosexual parents. On the other hand, knowing or learning about LGBT people might make someone less likely to insult or threaten someone he or she thinks is LGBT. Or, it might help someone be an ally to a friend who is being ostracized for having an LGBT parent.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS: MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

In one of the Minnesota pilot schools, a small group of parents vocally objected to the participation of the school in the *Welcoming Schools* pilot. The school administration and others involved in the pilot reiterated that *Welcoming Schools* is about *all* students and families. The outpouring of support for the project far exceeded resistance and an editorial in the local paper expressed its support for *Welcoming Schools*:

EDITORIAL: EDUCATORS NEED HELP TO COMBAT BULLYING, MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

In a Minneapolis classroom, a fourth-grader says "That's so gay," which in turn intimidates and offends a child with two moms. In the hallway, a third-grader shoulder-shoves another boy while using the other f-word.

Those types of exchanges occur regularly at Minneapolis elementary schools, educators say. So when children taunt, tease or harass their peers with antigay epithets, what should teachers do? That's the dilemma Minneapolis school leaders seek to address in considering the "Welcoming Schools" guide, a lesson plan on diversity, bullying, gender-stereotyping and name-calling.

Despite its worthy goals, the proposed program has become controversial. Some parents believe it's inappropriate to discuss sexual orientation in schools. Some say that programs such as "Welcoming Schools" directly conflict with their views on family structure. Understandably, these are sensitive issues. That's why the district would allow parents to opt out of the pilot program now under consideration.

At the same time, teachers and administrators have a duty to provide a safe, harassment-free learning environment. Children from all types of families attend our schools, and some parents expect educators to address even the most personal issues facing families today. The views of those parents are just as legitimate as the concerns voiced by parents who oppose diversity exercises in schools.

National research done by organizations including Mental Health America shows that bullying is a significant problem in schools, and that antigay harassment is one of its most prevalent forms. Behavior that used to occur mostly in high schools is increasingly seen in elementary and middle schools.

Harassed, bullied students are more likely to do poorly in class, miss school, drop out and consider suicide. And bullying that begins in the early grades can escalate into violent assault and even murder. In fact, some of the perpetrators in U.S. school shootings were victims of teasing or bullying. Those incidents prompted more than half of all states, including Minnesota, to adopt anti-bullying statutes.

That's another reason teachers cannot simply ignore the behavior -- it's the law. Case in point: A district in Illinois recently paid an eighth grader nearly \$1 million to settle a lawsuit for failing to protect him against antigay bullying.

The "Welcoming Schools" guide was created by Human Rights Campaign, a Washington-based gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual advocacy group. Minneapolis is considering using it on a pilot basis in three elementary schools — Hale, Jefferson and Park View — because staff members at schools around the district asked for help. The district uses other anti-bullying programs, but none that specifically addresses gender stereotypes or antigay harassment.

On May 28, the Minneapolis public schools curriculum and instruction committee will consider next steps. They can accept or reject the program, modify it or look for another teaching guide from another source.

Ideally they'll come up with a program that strikes a balance between the concerns of parents who object to having their children involved in discussions about sexual orientation at school and those parents who believe such a program is overdue.

**Welcoming Schools editor's note: As in this editorial, people often frame any mention of gay or lesbian people as a discussion of sexual orientation, but in the Guide we mention the words gay and lesbian in discussions of family, love or respect — concepts that students can understand. We think it is important to emphasize that we are not talking about sexuality or sexual orientation in the context of Welcoming Schools.*

INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES: RELEVANT RESEARCH

ADDRESSING INCLUSION, RESPECT AND SAFETY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- Schools that are characterized as safe encourage students to talk openly about safety, treat students with respect, help children feel safe expressing their feelings and involve families in meaningful ways.¹⁰
- Schools benefit when students are encouraged to consider the power of bystanders when bullying occurs. In one study, when bystanders *intervened*, they were able to stop the bullying two out of three times.¹¹
- Students who are bullied at school are more than twice as likely to report a suicide attempt than students who are not bullied.¹²
- Students who are exposed to racially diverse and integrated settings are less likely to harbor stereotypes as they grow older.¹³
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual students who attend racially diverse high schools report feeling safer than did those who attend more homogeneous schools.¹⁴
- According to the U.S. Department of Education, a major source of conflict in schools stems from perceived or actual bias and unfair treatment of students because of ethnicity, gender, race, social class, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, and physical appearance. These biases may be expressed or perceived by staff and/or students.¹⁵
- Both children who are targeted and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement in school.¹⁶

DIVERSE FAMILIES ARE IN ALL SCHOOLS

- More than 2.4 million fathers are the primary caregivers for their children.¹⁷
- 6.5 million children live with grandparents.¹⁸
- Almost 3 million children identify as being of more than one race.¹⁹
- More than 1.5 million children are adopted.²⁰
- 17 percent of all children live in a blended family.²¹
- Children who are raised with same-sex parents come from diverse households.
 - More than half of the African-American same-sex couples in California are raising children.²²

"Dear Mom:

Bobby hit me on the bus. I didn't do anything. What he did was put his earphones on my ear, and then I moved it away and he said, "Don't hit me, you little fagite [sic].” Then he hit me real hard. I wanted to cry. Then he said, “I'll hit you so hard you will want to cry forever.” Why does everyone pick on me? Why? I think I am ugly like people say. I don't think I look nice at all. Bye, Bye Jamal.”

- A letter written when Jamal was in 3rd grade.

"I have been called gay, faggot and a girl most of my life ... I have reached out for help so many times it's unbelievable. Nothing much has happened except a phone call home. I am still being teased and embarrassed in front of people and also my friends ... I have been putting up with this since elementary school. And let me tell you this — the longer you let this continue, the worse it will get. And it will be twice as hard to deal with."

- Jamal, in a letter written to his 7th-grade teachers.

- Hispanic same-sex couples are more than two to three times as likely to be raising children as white non-Hispanic same-sex couples.²³
- In nearly every U.S. county, there are gay- and lesbian-headed households, according to the U.S. census.²⁴ In heavily rural states, such as Mississippi, South Dakota and Alaska, households headed by same-sex couples are more likely to have children than same-sex households in other states.²⁵

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS LINKED TO ACCEPTANCE OF SELF AND OTHERS

- Students who develop social skills at an early age show greater levels of academic achievement.²⁶
- Students who feel they are more supported in school and at home generally have higher achievement levels.²⁷
- Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.²⁸
- In schools with a greater sense of community, students have higher educational aspirations and are more academically motivated.²⁹
- Students who are victimized at school and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement.³⁰
- Among students in grades K-5, the subtle activation of negative stereotypes hurt performance on quantitative tasks, while the subtle activation of positive stereotypes improved the students' performance.³¹
- Research has shown that children of same-sex couples do just as well on a diverse array of assessments, including personal, family and school adjustments, as children living with heterosexual parents.³²

"A 5th-grader had been having horrible tantrums at school and getting suspended frequently. He would fly off in a rage and pull down bulletin boards, kick over garbage cans, and so on. After doing the lessons on family diversity and gender identity, he came out to his teacher and to the principal. His behavior calmed down and he had very few behavioral referrals for the rest of the year. When the principal asked him why he was no longer having behavior problems he said, 'I'm not angry anymore. My secret is out.'"

- Principal from a California pilot site.

ANTI-GAY NAME-CALLING AFFECTS ALL STUDENTS

- In a nationwide survey, students said they feared anti-gay harassment more than any other kind of name-calling.³³
- For every lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender student who reported being harassed, four straight students said they were harassed for being perceived to be gay or lesbian.³⁴
- A study of middle-school students in central Illinois found that being called anti-gay names significantly predicts higher levels of trauma for students regardless of sexual orientation. Such name-calling may lead to anxiety, depression, personal distress and a lower sense of school belonging.³⁵
- In the 28 random shootings in U.S. schools between 1982 and 2001, nearly all the boys who committed the violence reported 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."³⁶

USING THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE IN THE ERA OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

In my school, there is not much room to add new lesson plans. Are there other strategies that teachers and schools can use to create a more inclusive climate?

Yes. There are many ways to create welcoming schools. The *Guide* includes simple activities that can be used to raise awareness in staff meetings, instructions for running educational parents' nights, examples of how to respond to name-calling, illustrations of teachable moments and extensive relevant bibliographies and resources.



Can the lesson plans from the Welcoming Schools Guide be aligned with Academic Standards?

Yes. Lesson plans in the guide have been aligned with language arts, social studies, health, visual and performing arts, social emotional learning and media studies. Classroom teachers helped create and edit the guide with an eye toward having lesson plan be relevance to current standards.

- [Curriculum Standards & Welcoming Schools Lesson Plans \[PDF\]](#)

What are some examples?

Examples of **English language arts** standards:

“Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment.”

“Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.”³⁷
 - National Standards for English Language Arts

Lesson plans that align to these standards include activities such as:

- writing letters to varied recipients such as a newspaper editor or an author;
- reading and discussing books that portray culturally diverse communities and family structures; and
- rewriting and writing fairy tales.

Examples of social studies standards:

“Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic. In the early grades, students are introduced to civic ideals and practices through activities such as helping to set classroom expectations, examining experiences in relation to ideals and determining how to balance the needs of individuals and the group.”

“. . . Young learners develop their personal identities in the context of families, peers, schools and communities. Central to this development are the exploration, identification and analysis of how individuals relate to others.”

- National Council for Social Studies Curriculum Standards³⁸

Lesson plans related to each of the three main themes of *Welcoming Schools* can be easily aligned with these standards:

- **Name-Calling and Bullying:** Most of these lesson plans address relationships among people. The lesson plans help students understand the consequences of name-calling, being a bystander and being an ally.
- **Gender Stereotyping:** These lesson plans help students examine the communities in which they live and examine the ideals of a community where all people can equally participate.
- **Family Diversity:** These lesson plans help students see their own families and others in the context their schools and their communities.

Do some states have curriculum standards directly related to school climate and anti-bias education?

Yes. In some states, these types of standards are seen as key to promoting student achievement and success in the diverse world in which students will live and work.

The **Illinois School Code** states:

“...anti-bias education and intergroup conflict resolution are effective methods for preventing violence and lessening tensions in the schools and that these methods are most effective when they are respectful of individuals and their divergent viewpoints and religious beliefs, which are protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.”³⁹

The **Oregon Department of Education: Standards for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools** states that Oregon’s K-12 schools should:

“. . . ensure that all Oregon students, regardless of linguistic background, culture, race, gender, capability or geographic location, have access to a quality education in a safe, motivating environment; ...

“. . . develop in Oregon students the core ethical values that our diverse society shares and holds important, including but not limited to, respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, justice and fairness and civic virtue and citizenship.”⁴⁰

CREATING A CARING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

SCHOOL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

This **School Climate Assessment** has been designed for both informal and formal school safety assessments for K–5 educators and administrators. This tool is based on the main categories that were measured in an evaluation of a multi-state pilot of *Welcoming Schools*.

The evaluation looked at the following areas:

- School policies and procedures
- School climate
- Attitudes of educators
- Comfort level of educators
- Teaching practices of educators



As an informal tool, an individual teacher may complete the survey to better understand his or her own practices as well as school policies that contribute to the school's diversity and safety. As a formal tool, the survey can help faculty and staff pinpoint any school climate challenges and clarify areas that need additional attention. Areas of weakness can become the basis for a school climate improvement plan. This assessment tool can be administered to the staff of an entire school or to any subgroup, such as fourth-grade teachers or a curriculum committee. It is not intended for use with students. To do a comprehensive school assessment, it is important to receive feedback from school staff, administrators, students and parents/guardians.

POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

1. Our school has a core values or mission statement that includes respect for diversity and multiculturalism.
Yes No Don't know
2. Our school has a written policy protecting students from harassment, violence and discrimination with regard to:
Race/Ethnicity Yes No Don't know
Religion Yes No Don't know
Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation Yes No Don't know
Physical Ability Yes No Don't know
Nationality Yes No Don't know
Perceived Gender Identity Yes No Don't know

Race/Ethnicity	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>
Religion	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>
Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>
Physical Ability	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>
Nationality	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>
Perceived Gender Identity	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/> Don't know <input type="text"/>

3. Our school district has an anti-bullying policy that specifically identifies bias-based bullying.

Yes No Don't know

4. Our forms that parent/guardians and students fill out are designed to reflect the diversity of households, including parents of the same gender.

Yes No Don't know

Look at the questions where you responded “No.” Keep these in mind as you plan your next steps.

- If you responded “Don’t Know,” it is time for some research to see what policies your school and school district already have in place. Then you can identify what work needs to be done.
- For more information see [Laws and Policies that Support Welcoming Schools](#)

SCHOOL-SPONSORED TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

1. In the last three years, our school has held workshops for educators inclusive of gender roles and gender stereotypes.

Yes No Don't know

2. In the last three years, our school has held trainings on welcoming all types of families, including topics such as divorce, multiracial families, same-sex parents, grandparent-headed families, and immigrant families.

Yes No Don't know

3. In the last three years, our school has held trainings for staff that monitor lunch and recess on bullying and name-calling that address bias-based harassment, including harassment related to a person’s real or perceived race, sexual orientation, learning status, size and language of origin.

Yes No Don't know

4. In the past two years, our school has held workshops for parents/guardians on family diversity.

Yes No Don't know

5. In the past two years, our school has held workshops for families on name-calling and bullying.

Yes No Don't know

- Were the trainings effective? If not, consider further trainings as part of a comprehensive school plan to create a more welcoming school. If trainings were effective, are there ways to build upon them?
- Notice where you said “No.” Include trainings on these topics as part of your overall plans.
- See [Connecting with Colleagues](#) or [Family Education and Community Building for Your School](#).

SCHOOL CLIMATE

1. In the last two weeks, have you heard students use words related to any of the following as slurs at your school:

- a. Gender (including word such as sissy and tomboy used negatively) Yes ____ No ____
- b. Race (including comments such as, “I can’t play with you because...”) Yes ____ No ____
- c. Sexual Orientation (including phrases such as “that’s so gay”) Yes ____ No ____
- d. Size (including words like fatso, phrases like “you can’t do that because”) Yes ____ No ____
- e. Academic Ability (including comments regarding special education) Yes ____ No ____
- f. Other: _____

- Spend some time reflecting upon the kinds of slurs you have heard and who or what groups of people are being targeted. Have conversations with others to see if they have similar or different perceptions.

2. In the last two weeks, have you seen students physically harass other students while using slurs or put-downs related to the above?

Yes ____ No ____

3. If yes, have you interrupted this behavior?

Always ____ Sometimes ____ Rarely ____ Never ____

4. School staff intervene if racial slurs are used in student interactions.

Always ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____ Don’t Know ____

5. School staff intervene if slurs related to special education are used in student interactions.

Always ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____ Don’t Know ____

6. School staff intervene if gender slurs or gender-based name-calling are used in student interactions.

Always ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____ Don’t Know ____

7. School staff intervene if anti-gay slurs or anti-gay name-calling is used in student interactions.

Always ____ Sometimes ____ Never ____ Don’t Know ____

- Notice where you responded “Sometimes,” “Never” or “Don’t Know.” Staff training is recommended to ensure that all types of slurs and name-calling are stopped.
- If you are not confident in your ability or if you rarely or never interrupt negative language or behavior, you may want to talk with school support staff or administration about developing effective strategies.
- Alternatively, you may want to attend a workshop that addresses bias-related bullying and name-calling that specifically includes handling LGBT- and gender-related put-downs.

- If you feel you successfully respond to negative language or behavior, are there ways in which you can help others learn these skills?
- See [What Do You Say to “That’s So Gay”](#) or [Connecting with Colleagues](#).

TEACHING PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

1. Our school’s curriculum includes multicultural perspectives.

Yes No Don’t know

2. Our school library offers a range of multicultural books.

Yes No Don’t know

3. Our school library has books that show a diversity of families, including families with two moms or two dads, immigrant parents, single parents, multiracial parents, etc.

Yes No Don’t know

4. The classrooms in our school have books that show a diversity of families, including families with two moms or two dads, immigrant parents, single parents, multiracial parents etc.

Yes No Don’t know

5. If they’re doing a lesson plan to enhance understanding of different kinds of families, educators include diverse families — including some with two moms or two dads.

Yes No Don’t know

6. In a lesson plan on name-calling or bullying, educators include gender- or LGBT-related put-downs.

Yes No Don’t know

7. Educators in our school feel comfortable defining the words “gay” or “lesbian” to students.

In the classroom? Yes No Don’t know

One on one? Yes No Don’t know

- Notice where you responded “Yes.” Have conversations with other educators about ways in which school curriculum has become more reflective of the world in which we live.
- Notice where you responded “No.” Keep these in mind as you plan your next steps.
- See [Additional Resources Available from Welcoming Schools](#) for lesson plans on Family Diversity, Name-calling and Gender
- See the [Annotated Bibliographies in Welcoming Schools](#)

PERSONAL COMFORT LEVEL

1. If a parent or care-giver “came out” to me I would feel...

very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don’t know

2. If I had to address students' stereotypic opinions of families of color I would feel...
very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don't know

3. If I had to work closely with lesbian or gay parents or care-givers, I would feel...
very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don't know

4. If I had to answer a student's question about why a mother would decide to have her child adopted by another family, I would feel...
very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don't know

5. If I had to answer a student's questions about how someone can have two moms or two dads, I would feel
very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don't know

6. If I had to answer a student's question about how a white parent can have a child who was not white, I would feel...
very comfortable, comfortable, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable, I don't know
 - Notice what makes you more or less comfortable. Start conversations with colleagues or find books or online resources that might help you increase your comfort level.
 - See [Connecting with Colleagues](#) or [Bibliography for Educators and Parents/Guardians](#).

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

1. Obstacles to addressing **family diversity or name-calling inclusive of LGBT families or LGBT slurs** with students by staff in our school are based on: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of parental dissatisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> Educators lack resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students are too young | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious objections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time in curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate to discuss outside of the home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators lack training | <input type="checkbox"/> Need time for basics (writing, reading, math) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> There are no objections |

2. Obstacles to addressing **gender roles and expression** with students by staff in our school are based on: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of parental dissatisfaction | <input type="checkbox"/> Educators lack resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students are too young | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious objections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of time in curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate to discuss outside of the home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educators lack training | <input type="checkbox"/> Need time for basics (writing, reading, math) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> There are no objections |

3. People/institutions that might **support** addressing family diversity, gender-stereotyping, and bullying include:

Educators Members of civic organizations
 Administrators Religious organizations
 Parents/Guardians Others: _____

- Look at the categories that you have checked. As you plan next steps, think about how you can work with supporters and address potential concerns.
- Think about holding school community forums or holding trainings.
- See [Family Education and Community Building for Your School](#) or [Connecting with Colleagues](#).

SELF-REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

Each section of this survey provides information that can be used to plan future staff development workshops. Discussing the following topics can help inform the direction of a school climate improvement plan by identifying the school's strengths and challenges:

- The Three Things We Do Best...
- The Three Things We Most Need to Work On...
- Perceived Obstacles to Improvement...
- The First Steps Toward Positive Change Are...and Who Will Complete Them...
- In Order to Improve Our School Climate We Need the Following Help and Resources...

Once the assessment is complete and some strategies are identified, share the results with other educators and administrators in your school if they have not already been involved in the process. The school guidance counselor or social worker can be an especially effective ally in creating a safer school. This assessment tool leads to identifying individual school strengths and areas that need further development. **The tool is only as effective as the follow-up strategies it generates. Its purpose is to lead to action.**

YOUR ROLE AS A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

“Our schools can, and should be, places where students are free to learn unencumbered by fear. It's their right and our responsibility.”

– From a Letter in Support of *Welcoming Schools* by the Superintendent of the Minnesota pilot site

PROVIDE STRONG LEADERSHIP THAT MODELS AND ENGENDERS RESPECT

- Work to ensure that all students feel respected, seen and understood. Work with the school district administration to be sure they understand the importance of creating safe, caring and respectful schools for all children and families.
- Create a school climate where teachers feel safe and supported when they use inclusive curriculum or respond to teachable moments.
- Explain how the acceptance of all children and their families is linked with academic success.
- Foster active relationships between parents/guardians and your school. Promote education of the parent community on respect, inclusion of all families, freedom of gender expression and the dangers of harassment.

ESTABLISH EXPECTATIONS OF RESPECT THROUGH SCHOOL POLICIES

- Include respect in core values and mission statements.
- Work for explicitly inclusive school policies on harassment and discrimination. Establish and enforce clear, consistent disciplinary guidelines.
- Develop proactive strategies and policies for stopping harassment before it occurs and responding appropriately when it does.

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE THAT REFLECTS DIVERSE FAMILY STRUCTURES

- Look at student forms, handbooks, school directories, and school/home communications to ensure connections with all of your students' families.

RECOGNIZE CULTURAL CONTEXTS IN THE WAYS PEOPLE APPROACH FAMILY DIVERSITY & GENDER

- Ensure that trainings about family diversity, gender, and LGBT topics are inclusive of racial and ethnic diversity. Lead with listening. Don't assume that someone's race, religion, age or socioeconomic status predicts a person's views about gender or LGBT people.

IMPLEMENT SOCIAL-SKILL-BUILDING AND ANTI-BULLYING CURRICULA

- Proactively develop students' skills to work together, learn from social issues, manage conflict and stand up for themselves and each other.

ALLOT TIME AND RESOURCES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Work together on prevention of harassment, fostering emotional safety for all students and practicing child-friendly language regarding diverse families. Ensure that bias-based teasing and name-calling are specifically addressed. Make sure this training includes all personnel – teachers, support staff, administrators.

ENSURE THAT THE BOOKS AND CURRICULA USED IN THE SCHOOL REFLECT ALL THE STUDENTS' LIVES IN YOUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

- Books and curricula provide an important mirror for students to see themselves and their families reflected in the world around them. Books and curricula also provide a window into the lives of others and expand students' personal experience. Provide positive role models for all children in your school.

SPEAK UP

- Ensure that concern for saying the “wrong” thing doesn’t keep you and others silent. Answer students’ questions. Silence can communicate the message that it is wrong or shameful to even say the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual” or “transgender.” Interrupt hurtful name-calling and the derogatory use of the word “gay.”
- Remember, you are talking about individuals or a group of people who are in your community — as parents, aunts, uncles, cousins. They may not be visible, but you are talking about people and families.

“I have learned in teaching about racism that a sincere, though imperfect, attempt to interrupt oppression of others is usually better than no attempt at all.”

- Beverly Tatum in “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”

“The principals [who piloted Welcoming Schools] have gained trust of their faculties. What you see is what you get, they are on top of problems at their schools. Their faculties recognize them as instructional leaders. They’re not frightened to engage their parents and to be leaders.”

- Assistant Superintendent in Massachusetts Pilot Site.

YOUR ROLE AS AN EDUCATOR



"Kids like to have discussions and be able to voice their opinions to adults because this could clear up any misconceptions children [may have]."

– Educator from Massachusetts pilot site

LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- Assess the level of support among your colleagues, administration and parent/guardian community to create a welcoming school inclusive of children with LGBT parents/guardians. Consider the most logical first steps to creating a more welcoming school.
- Communicate with your administration to develop support. Network with other teachers, staff or families in your school or district. Collaborate with the PTO/PTA to develop educational forums on family diversity and respect.
- Review your school or school system's core values, mission statements and policies to support inclusion and respect.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE – SETTING A POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE TONE FOR ALL

- Choose activities that encourage students to discover what they have in common as well as what is unique and special about each other.
- Create and implement clear class agreements or rules with your students regarding respect, caring for classmates and not hurting each other with words or actions.
- Make the most of teachable moments to reinforce these guidelines and build social skills such as listening, talking things out, conflict management, being an ally, developing friendships and the ability to work with students who are different.

MIRRORS FOR THEIR LIVES, WINDOWS TO THE WORLD

- Expose students to diverse positive role models in literature, in your school and in your community. When inviting speakers or creating classroom displays, be inclusive of diverse family structures, races, gender expressions, ethnicities and abilities. Feature women and men in a wide range of occupations.
- Display images that encourage diversity and respect and posters that remind students that words can hurt. Have conversations about what these posters and images mean and how they relate to your class.
- Have books with diverse family structures, including two-mom and two-dad families, and characters in non-traditional gender roles on your bookshelves. (See the [Bibliographies – Our Favorites](#) or the more extensive, [Annotated Bibliographies](#).)

- Integrate units on respect, family diversity, gender, name-calling and bullying into your teaching. Ensure that these units also reflect cultural, racial, gender and ethnic diversity. (See [Additional Resources Available from Welcoming Schools](#) for a list of lesson plans.)

EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Ask your administration to organize staff development opportunities to explore issues of family diversity, gender, name-calling and bullying as a full staff. Offer your help in designing and implementing this. (See [Connecting with Colleagues](#))
- Be prepared for teachable moments. Practice how you might answer students' questions about family diversity, diverse gender expression or about LGBT people. Practice how to respond when you hear, "That's so gay!" (See [What Do You Say to "That's So Gay?"](#))

"I myself have a student in my class who has parents of the same gender and it has never come up as a discussion. It's never been talked about ... It's not that I don't feel comfortable talking about it, I just feel it has never come up as an issue. But now that all the discussion about the Welcoming Schools curriculum has come up, I have often thought about how that particular child might feel left out at times because it has never been discussed."

- Minnesota pilot site educator

"If you are not explicit [about addressing diverse identities] you will not prepare students for middle school [where] victimization, raging hormones, and bigger kids all come into play and kids can get seriously hurt, whether physically or emotionally."

- Educator from a California pilot school

WORKING WITH SCHOOL BOARDS



Most school boards are aware that their communities are diverse – whether that diversity is visible or not. School communities include families of different economic means, races, and religions. School communities include families with different structures, including families with a mother and a father, grandparent-headed families, single parents, and families with LGBT parents.

School board members may not know the importance of making schools inclusive for all of these families. Some may have varying degrees of comfort with being inclusive of families with LGBT parents. But most will understand that families are important to elementary school students and critical to their well-being. As schools fulfill their mission to reflect the realities of the world around them, school boards and school administrators are important partners in the move toward full inclusion.

GET TO KNOW THE SCHOOL BOARD

- **Actively participate by meeting with local school board members and encourage other supportive parents/guardians to do the same.** Personal contact makes issues of inclusion more real to school board members. This helps ground the conversation as a real-life community issue and takes discussions out of the abstract political realm.
- **Show that there is support for *Welcoming Schools*** from a range of community members.
- **Identify how working to create a welcoming school connects with current school initiatives** and can help address other issues your school faces.
- **Testify before the school board.** Prepare what you want to say. Share your perspective as a parent, guardian or grandparent with students in the schools. Use stories from your experience or your children’s experiences in the schools.
- **Listen carefully to concerns, questions, doubts and fears.** Look for opportunities to foster dialogue in a respectful and personal manner.

PROVIDE INFORMATION TO SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

- **Help the school board understand the educational benefits of creating a welcoming classroom for all children:**
 - Students in schools with a greater sense of community are more academically motivated, have higher educational aspirations and enjoy school more.⁴¹
 - Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated and engaged in learning and more committed to school.⁴²
 - When there is a positive relationship between families and schools, students perform better academically and socially.⁴³

- Helping children develop social skills at an early age may have a greater impact on their academic abilities than concentrating solely on their academics.⁴⁴
- **Offer resources from the *Welcoming Schools Guide*.** Provide information on laws and policies, connections with standards, facts to back up your points and simple ways to create welcoming schools.
- **Training and support:** Find out what is available in the community that can be offered to the school district. Look to the state, regional or national level if local support is limited.

WHAT CAN YOU ASK FOR?

- **A mission or core values statement that includes respect.** This is a key way to help all children thrive at school.
- **Support for administrators and educators** who are working to create welcoming schools for all students.
- **Review, evaluation and updating of school policies and handbooks.** Ensure that all types of harassment and discrimination are forbidden. Advocate for harassment and discrimination policies that explicitly include protection related to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, class, size, religion, sex and nationality.
- **Trainings for administrators, educators and staff.** Include administrative or school-based trainings on the educational value of creating welcoming schools for students and families, exploring laws and policies, and prevention of harassment and bullying. Ensure gender-based and anti-gay teasing and name-calling are specifically addressed, as well as other forms of bias-based bullying related to race, religion, sex, class and nationality. Consider trainings on different kinds of families that are inclusive of LGBT-headed families. These trainings can create a forum for answering questions and clarifying misconceptions.
- **Review of school forms.** Ensure they are inclusive of the full range of family structures.
- **Inclusion of books in school libraries.** Have books that reflect all the children's families in the school and the community. Assume that your community represents the full array of family structures, whether visible or not.
- **Ensure that social skills are a part of the elementary school curriculum.** Proactively develop children's skills to work together, deal with social issues, manage conflict and stand up for themselves and each other. Help students develop empathy, understanding and respect.

THAT'S A FAMILY! FILM SHOWING

In one pilot site, the Welcoming Schools task force did a presentation for the school committee and an interfaith group that had a working relationship with the school district. The presentation included a showing and discussion of the film, That's a Family!, which portrays children from all diverse families talking about their lives. Small group discussions after the film resulted in dialogue among religious leaders, parents, school administrators, educators and school committee members. People who would not have thought they had much common ground were sharing touching details of their lives and families with each other.

FIND SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

- **Work with and engage other parents, guardians and educators to build support for *Welcoming Schools*.** Engage families that represent all forms of family diversity. Find ways to connect with other families who may face challenges in the school related to race, faith, family structure and class.
- **Work with the PTOs/PTAs** to create welcoming school communities for all families.
- **Contact organizations in your community.** Think about who may support this work, such as youth-serving agencies, family centers and religious organizations
- **Talk with other elected officials.** Help them understand the value of welcoming schools for all students and families. Ask for their support.

RESOURCES IN WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Why Discuss Family Diversity, Teasing, Name-Calling and Gender?](#)
- [Responding to Concerns about Being LGBT Inclusive](#)
- [Inclusive Schools and Communities: Relevant Research](#)
- [Laws and Policies that Support *Welcoming Schools*](#)
- [Legal Resources for Digging Deeper \[PDF\]](#)
- [Using the *Welcoming Schools Guide* in the Era of No Child Left Behind](#)
- [Curriculum Standards & *Welcoming Schools* Lesson Plans \[PDF\]](#)
- [Supportive Resolutions from Education Associations](#)

YOUR ROLE AS A LIBRARIAN

"My feeling is that a library is to serve an entire population. It means you represent different families in a society — different religions, different beliefs."

- Shiloh School District of Illinois Superintendent Jennifer Filyaw⁴⁵

MIRRORS FOR THEIR LIVES, WINDOWS TO THE WORLD: LITERATURE FOR STUDENTS

- Books provide an important mirror for children to see themselves reflected in the world around them. Books also provide a window into the lives of others and expand students' personal experiences.
- Children who feel that they belong and are welcome in school are more highly motivated and engaged in learning and more committed to school.⁴⁶
- Books can help students understand that families are unique while at the same time they share many common values, beliefs and traditions.
- Students can find positive role models through literature. Positive images in books have a positive impact on children's lives.⁴⁷ Race- and gender-matched role models can improve students' aspirations for their future.⁴⁸



STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Include books in your collection that reflect the diversity of children in your school and your community. Include books that help students see and understand the diversity in the world in which they live.
- Read books and make displays of books that show a wide range of activities, emotions and achievements for boys and girls/men and women. Provide a range of role models.
- Create a display of picture books or chapter books featuring a diversity of families. Show the many ways that families come to be: adoptive families; multiracial families; grandparents caring for children; single parents; LGBT parents; and many others.
- When you are creating displays for special topics, think about how those displays can show people in diverse gender roles and be inclusive of LGBT people and families. For example, in a display for African-American History month, include a book about Bayard Rustin. In a display about penguins, include the book *When Tango Makes Three*. In a display about friendship, include books from the Pinky and Rex series.
- Coordinate with other educators and/or the PTO/PTA to have a week focused on stopping hurtful name-calling and bullying. Create library displays and read books to students that highlight ways to be an ally, interrupt name-calling and respect one another.
- Create a display of books for the study of authors such as Tomie DePaola, Todd Parr, Jacqueline Woodson or James Howe.
- Make the bibliographies in the *Welcoming Schools Guide* available to other educators in your school or to families.
- Ask other educators in your school to help you pick relevant books. Have an occasional book group where a small group reads the same books and reports back about what they liked and didn't like about the books and ways they might integrate these books into the curriculum.

- Work with other educators and/or with the PTO/PTA to develop family book bags for different grade levels with books showing a range of diversity in your school and community. This can provide a forum for students and families to both read together and to discuss diversity and values at home. (See [Family Book Bags \[PDF\]](#))

POLICY

"Local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books."

- Supreme Court Justice William Brennan ⁴⁹

- Familiarize yourself with your district's core values or mission statement and how it encourages respect or fosters tolerance. Consider how book selection supports these goals.
- Understand your school district's policies on book selection and reconsideration procedures.
- Be sure to follow policies if a question arises concerning a book.
- If there is a question or concern about a book, discuss it with your principal/supervisor.
- Check out the websites for the American Library Association, the National Council of Teachers of English Intellectual Freedom or the others listed below for further advice when concerns are raised about a book.

RESOURCES FOR LIBRARIANS

- See the [Annotated Bibliographies in Welcoming Schools](#)
- The Cooperative Children's Book Center, at: www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc.
- First Amendment Center, "Libraries and First Amendment Issues: Banned Books," at: www.firstamendmentcenter.org/speech/libraries/topic.aspx?topic=banned_books.
- GLBT Round Table of the American Library Association, at: www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/rts/glbtrt/index.cfm
- National Coalition Against Censorship, "Learning, Speaking and Thinking Freely: The First Amendment in Schools," at: <http://65.49.16.213/education/schools/index.cfm>
- National Council of Teachers of English, at: www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship.
- Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, at: www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/index.cfm%20
- A school librarian from a CA Pilot site created a website for members of the school community to use to access books related to *Welcoming Schools*, at: <http://emersonschool.pbwiki.com/Welcoming-Schools>
- A detailed blog in response to a library patron's concern about Uncle Bobby's Wedding, Jamie LaRue, Librarian, Douglas County, Colorado, July 2008. <http://jaslarue.blogspot.com/2008/07/uncle-bobbys-wedding.html>

YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT OR CARING ADULT

All parents and caring adults have a role in creating welcoming elementary schools - from modeling caring and respectful behavior at home to educating your school community on the importance of the inclusion of all children and families.

BE CONNECTED WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

- Get to know other parents/guardians in your school community. Be an ally. Develop allies. Work with a diverse range of concerned families to create a safe and caring school for all children.
- Work with the PTO/PTA to create a welcoming school community for all families.
- Talk to your principal, school superintendent or school system director of elementary education about the need for teacher training and educational resources that support children from diverse families. Offer the *Welcoming Schools Guide* as a resource.
- Look at the many ways to make your school more accessible. Understand the impact of language barriers, economic challenges and differing cultural expectations and experiences.
- Talk with your child about what is going on at school. Find out if there is hurtful teasing, name-calling or bullying happening. Make sure your child feels safe and respected at school. Don't assume all is well if your child is silent. Some children feel they need to protect their parents from what is happening to them.
- Ensure your child's classroom and school library include materials representing all families. If possible, donate relevant books.
- Be sure to tell the teachers and administrators when you feel they are doing a good job of creating a respectful and caring school. They'll appreciate your support.

"My own 10-year-old sits at the dinner table and says 'Oh, you're being so gay'... Well, as a parent I'm also trying to come to terms with how comfortable I feel discussing these things."

- Parent from Massachusetts pilot site

EDUCATE YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY ON FAMILY DIVERSITY, GENDER STEREOTYPING'S IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND STOPPING HURTFUL TEASING AND BULLYING

- Work with school-based organizations or committees to sponsor events and activities in your school that help build community and respect for all children and all families.
- Hold evening events for parents/guardians (or for families including students) with films or guest speakers to discuss and answer questions about different kinds of families or to address bullying and name-calling.
- Provide accessible resources on families, gender and bullying to administrators, educators and families.
- Ask the school's social worker or guidance counselor to address these topics for families.

STEPS TO TAKE AT HOME

- Establish a respectful environment at home. Model caring and respect for other people.
- Share books with your children that:
 - Include different kinds of families.
 - Feature boys and girls doing a wide range of activities and showing a range of emotions.
 - Show kids sticking up for each other in the face of bullying behaviors.
 - Model positive ways to work things out and handle conflict.
- Talk with your child about your religious beliefs. Help him or her understand that while you might disagree with someone else's beliefs, you can still respect the person.



TAKE ACTION

- Advocate for school district policies and state laws that ensure safe and respectful schools for all children, all families and all educators. (See [Laws & Policies that Support Welcoming Schools](#).)
- Stay informed. Follow the issues that affect your child's school by reading the local paper and attending school committee meetings.
- Let your opinions be heard. Speak up for respect. Write letters to the editor. Speak up at school committee meetings.
- Be a leader. Become active with your PTO/PTA. Join your school council or run for the school board/committee.

RESOURCES IN WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- [Creating Welcoming Schools: Getting Started](#)
- [Family Education and Community Building in Your School](#)
- [Your Role as a School Administrator](#)
- [Why Discuss Family Diversity, Teasing, Name-Calling and Gender?](#)
- [Taking a Look at Some Concerns about Being LGBT-Inclusive](#)
- [Annotated Bibliographies from Welcoming Schools](#)
- [An example of Partnering with Schools to Support Children with Gender Variant Behaviors and Interests \[from www.hrc.org\]](#)

YOUR ROLE AS AN LGBT PARENT OR CARING ADULT

As children enter the world of school, many parents/guardians wonder how they can best support their children in their first steps into a broader community. Often there is a heightened concern among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents/guardians.

There are many things that you can do — both emotionally and practically — to support your children. You can talk to your children about families and their commonalities and differences. You can help them anticipate questions about their family and give them language to help them talk about it.

At the same time, you can also work proactively to make schools welcoming and safe environments for all children and their families.

- Find support in the community! Work with other parents, guardians and educators to help create a more welcoming school. Engage families who represent all forms of family diversity. Take the initiative to connect with other families who may face challenges in the school related to race, family structure and/or class.
- Assume that parents/guardians, teachers, staff and administration are all on the same team and all want what is best for all students. Most educators genuinely care about their students and their academic and emotional well-being.
- Help your child's teacher understand your family and that your child (like every other child) needs acceptance, respect and understanding. Children perform better academically and socially when there is a positive parent/school relationship.
- Find ways to contribute to your child's school community. The single best way to become accepted in a school community is to be a positive and productive presence. Let people get to know you and your child as individuals.
- Advocate for your child in a manner that respects the world of the school personnel. Schools have hundreds of children to educate, shrinking budgets to juggle and state and federal test standards to meet. Approach a school with openness, patience, confidence and information.
- Remember, lack of understanding or experience with families that have LGBT parents/guardians does not necessarily equal ill-intent. A school may not have previously addressed family diversity, but that does not mean it won't if you ask and provide relevant resources.
- Research persuasively shows that children who feel supported by and have a sense of pride in their families are better equipped to deal with and maintain a positive sense of self-esteem when confronted with prejudice.
- The *Welcoming Schools Guide* provides resources for you as a parent and resources you can provide to your child's educators. There are many ways this guide can be used, whether in part or in its entirety.

"By being very open and talking about our family in a natural way, we've set the tone that our relationship is not the issue, but our child's education is."

- Mary Delvo and her partner Raynelle, of Minnesota, are the parents of two boys, 6 and 4, one with special needs

- Use the Family Education and Community Building section of the guide and work with other parents/guardians to organize an evening event that will help your school community understand the diversity of families in students' lives.
 - Provide *Welcoming Schools* materials to your school.
 - If your child's teacher feels unprepared to answer other students' questions about your family, you could provide the [Guide to Age-Appropriate Definitions for Students \[PDF\]](#) or [Questions Students May Ask with Possible Answers About LGBT People \[PDF\]](#).
 - Offer the bibliographies from *Welcoming Schools* to your school librarian.
 - Follow up with a meeting with the principal, counselor and/or teacher and discuss ways these can be used.
- Your child deserves to be and feel safe at school. Listen carefully to and talk with your child to see if other students are teasing him or her about your family. If they are, approach the teachers and school administrators. Teasing can be the result of a lack of knowledge or familiarity rather than malice. School-wide education for adults and students is the best way to put an end to it — or stop it from developing.
- As your child enters school, determine your level of comfort in being open. For a variety of reasons including custody issues, job security and personal safety, you may choose to be less open. Be as open as possible about your family. School personnel cannot be supportive about family situations about which they have no knowledge.
- Although you may fear that your child will encounter prejudice at school, young children do not assume that. To your children, your family is his or her family and that is what matters. Try not to pass on adult fears to your children.
- In early elementary school, most children's questions about LGBT parents come from curiosity rather than prejudice. Model for your children how to answer questions simply.
- Depending on the age and development of your child, you can discuss with him or her what kind of support he or she wants in school. For example, you can ask your child whether he or she would like you to have a conversation with the teacher about your family at the beginning of the school year. If you volunteer in the class, does your child want you to come out in any way? You may determine that these decisions belong to you as a parent, but they are questions that should be considered.
- Respect your child's wishes. Especially as your child moves on in elementary school, ask if he or she wants your help in talking with a teacher or the principal if an incident arises (unless health and safety are at stake). Work with your child on steps he or she could take or conversations the child could have with teachers or other students if he or she chose to.
- Connect your child to other kids who have LGBT parents/guardians. Knowing that they are not alone and are, in fact, part of a community of kids who have LGBT families will help your child gain pride.

FAMILY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR YOUR SCHOOL



"By getting information to the parents and, then, having them feel a little more comfortable, they'll be able to approach their children in a way that they're more comfortable."

- Parent from a Massachusetts pilot site

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.

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.
- Serve food!

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

This award winning film can be a simple way to open discussion about all kinds of diverse families including multi-racial, adoptive, single-parented, and same-sex-parented. The children in this film speak for themselves. They are eloquent and talk of the love that brings healthy families together. An evening event can be held either only for adults or for families. This accessible film can help address parental concerns and answer children's questions. At a family forum you can generate a rich discussion using the 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. (See [That's A Family! A Evening Family Forum \[PDF\]](#))

At a community meeting at a Massachusetts pilot school to introduce parents/guardians to some of the topics of Welcoming Schools, the film That's a Family! was shown. Child care was provided for students. The following day, a parent who attended the meeting ran into a member of the Welcoming Schools task force. She thanked the committee member profusely for Welcoming Schools. She explained that after the meeting, her son asked what the adults had been talking about. When she described the content of the film, she said she had one of the best conversations with her son. "I couldn't believe how much he already knew!" she told the member of the task force.

"Is Your Family Like Mine?" Panel Discussion

This is a great way for people in the school community to 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. Prepare 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?" Also, make sure you ask people to 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. See ["Is Your Family Like Mine?" Panel Discussion \[PDF\]](#).

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. Have a facilitator ask the whole group questions one at a time, and then smaller groups can discuss possible ways to answer them. Share insights with the whole group. See [Answering Your Children's Tough Questions: An Evening Workshop \[PDF\]](#).

COMMUNITY MEETINGS DISCUSS ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

"What expands and enriches Zach's and Justin's lives is not only that we are a multi-racial family with two dads, but also that Michael and I bring so many different perspectives into their lives. As in a mosaic, what makes our family beautiful and unique is the many different patterns and shapes which together create a whole picture."

- Doug Robinson, parent of two and member of the Welcoming School Advisory Board.

"[During our community meeting] one of the instructional assistants was definitely out of her comfort zone. She is a devout Christian, older, African-American woman with pretty traditional views. I've worked with her for years and respect her greatly, but haven't sensed any sympathy for this subject before. You could even see from her body language that she was uncomfortable in the beginning. As the day went on, she became more and more relaxed and responsive. When I talked to her at the end, she said, "We have to do this type of lesson for the kids. It doesn't matter what we think of their families, we are responsible to teach them and make them feel safe and valued. They belong to our community and we have to protect them."

- A principal from a California pilot site

CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES – LEARNING TOGETHER

CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES – LEARNING TOGETHER

“When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world, and you’re not in it, there’s a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.”

- Adrienne Rich, poet



The Connecting with Colleagues — Learning Together section of the *Welcoming Schools Guide* provides administrators and educators with the resources and activities they need to facilitate informative and inspiring professional development workshops with their colleagues. They are designed for educators who are interested in working with colleagues to explore and expand their knowledge and develop an awareness of

lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics. The activities can also be useful for parents and community allies who want to form discussion groups.

Most of the topics we discuss and teach in schools are topics that we have had practice talking about in our own schooling, our families or our places of worship.

LGBT people and issues are different. Most of us — educators, teachers and parents — did not talk about LGBT people as children. In fact, most of us were unaware that we knew any. Some have never talked about these topics at all and others never used the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual” or “transgender” until they were young adults.

Some of us never heard these words used in a positive context until we were adults. Some of us still haven’t. Bringing the voices, images and history of LGBT people into our professional development and conversations with colleagues will not only broaden our own horizons but will begin to bring positive change.

Many teachers don’t have the language or knowledge base to talk about topics regarding LGBT people in their classrooms. Many teachers also don’t have the experience or comfort level to interrupt anti-gay name-calling or to answer questions from students such as “What does ‘gay’ mean?” or “How can he have two moms?” It is important to practice answering questions and interrupting hurtful behavior. As we gain facility with the language, we become better able to facilitate dialogue and create change.

“During our first big [Welcoming Schools] orientation with the teachers, there was a lot of interaction. We talked about self-awareness, of their own experiences.”

- Assistant superintendent,
Massachusetts pilot site

The activities are designed to provide structure and content for conversations in which to share ideas, put thoughts into words and practice and make mistakes with our colleagues. These activities will give teachers the opportunity to learn from the actual experiences of children and learn from each other. Each activity should begin by the group agreeing to a set of ground rules such as these:

GROUND RULES:

It is important to set ground rules that will ensure confidentiality and respect.

- Listen and learn.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Talk respectfully, no put-downs allowed.
- Explore new ideas.
- Everyone sets their own boundaries for personal disclosure.
- Respect different experiences.
- Share time equally.

ICE BREAKER: SHARING CHALLENGES IN DISCUSSING LGBT TOPICS

Level: Educators

Length of time: One and a half minutes per participant and a five- to 15-minute large-group discussion

Activity

“What’s difficult and/or scary for you about talking about LGBT topics … in your school community … in your classroom?”

When a working group or grade-level cluster commits to learning about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics and people, it is useful to start the work by asking each member to give a short 30-second answer to each of the three questions listed below. These questions acknowledge that these issues are difficult for everyone to discuss for a wide range of reasons that can be as simple as lack of knowledge. The fears that surface when answering these questions are deep-seated and, once aired, can lead to greater understanding and the establishment of more authentic dialogue.

Arrange seats in a circle. Acknowledge that there may be a wide range of responses to the questions. Remind participants that it is the diversity of opinions and backgrounds that will make the discussion rich. Remember that diversity is a strength, not a problem, in a school community. There is no right response. Remind participants that most LGBT people grew up never talking about LGBT topics and people. We are all learning together.

Each participant has 30 seconds or less to respond to each question. Ask the first question and ask everyone to respond, then ask the second question and so on. Participants should not respond to each other until everyone has had a chance to talk.

1. What’s difficult and/or scary for you about talking about LGBT topics … in your school community … in your classroom?
2. Why is it important to talk about LGBT topics … in your school community … in your classroom?
3. How do you think your students know what they know about LGBT people?

After everyone has answered, debrief the discussion by appreciating participants’ willingness to share honestly. Ask for more appreciations and observations of commonalities. Ask the group if there were topics that came up that highlight areas for learning and action.

Modification: People could pair up. Then, ask the first question and have each pair discuss their responses. Next, ask for a few people to say what came up. Do the same with the second and third questions.

SKILLS-BUILDING EXERCISE: RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS

“Of course, it was just as the bell was about to ring, when I overheard Max, one of my fourth-graders say, “lesbians are so weird.” I wasn’t sure what to say to him. I was taken aback. However, some of the other students stepped right in and said, “Where did you hear that? Don’t you know that Amy’s moms are lesbians? They aren’t weird.” Max ended up feeling bad. I realized that we had never talked about it in school and that he didn’t have any idea what the word meant except as a slur and that he didn’t know that it could actually apply to people he knew.”

- Teacher from a Massachusetts pilot site

Level: Educators. **Length of Time:** 45 – 60 minutes.

Introduction

Most of the topics 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.

Therefore, this activity gives educators the opportunity to practice talking about LGBT topics. 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.

Participants will have a wide variety of responses to these questions, including not being able to find words. There are no right responses or wrong responses when doing this activity. It is important that participants feel comfortable enough to try out new vocabulary and language that initially may feel awkward and uncomfortable.

For examples of more questions and responses see the longer version of this activity in Connecting with Colleagues from *Welcoming Schools*. See [Practicing Responses – Extended Version \[PDF\]](#).

Materials: Large paper or a white board, markers, handout with questions and possible responses.

Activity

- Introduce the activity by saying that this activity gives participants a chance to practice answering students’ questions about LGBT topics. It provides participants with an opportunity to reflect on their own level of comfort and familiarity with various questions that elementary school children might ask.
- 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.
- The facilitator reads a question and all the “ones” have one minute to share their answer with the “twos.” (See questions on page 51)

- 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.
- Continue shifting the circle and answering questions in this way. Take some time in between questions to ask for a few responses to be shared with the full group.
- 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 an easel paper or white board.

Developed by Lesley Strang, early childhood educator, and edited by Emmy Howe, Open View Farm Educational Center, Conway, Mass. See: www.openviewfarm.org

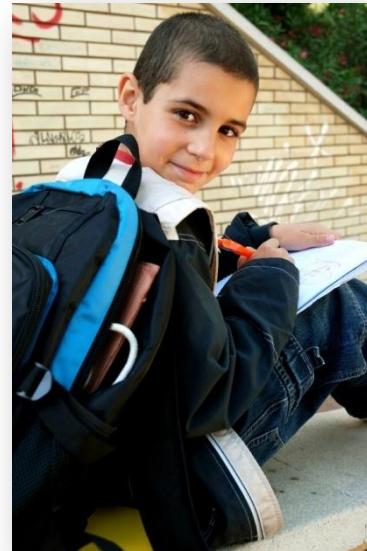
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS

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

A discussion with elementary-age students about the meanings of “gay” or “lesbian” is a discussion about love and relationships. You can just clarify that people love each other in different ways. Some women love and want to be partners with a man and some women love and want to be partners with a woman. It can be helpful to give concrete examples, such as “Tanya and Angela love each other and they want to be family to each other.” (For further discussion, see the one page handout, “[What Does ‘Gay’ Mean?](#)”)

Sample responses:

- *A person who loves, in a very special way, someone who is the same gender. For example, a gay man wants to be involved with and love another man.*
- *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.*



2. “**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 will help you respond to other students’ questions.

Sample response:

- *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.*

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

Sample response:

- *People have lots of different ideas about families. Your grandma is not the only one who thinks that. There are many kinds of families. Some have a mom and a dad. Some have two moms. Some have one mom. 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*

4. “He always dresses like a girl and says he’s a girl but isn’t he a boy?” “If she isn’t a boy, why does she look and act like one all the time?”

Some children from a very young age start to say that they feel like they are in the wrong body. Even though a child appears to be a boy, they will say they are a girl and they prefer to wear dresses or other clothes to appear more like a girl. They may also prefer activities that are traditionally considered activities for girls. At the same time, while biologically a girl, a child may start saying, “I’m a boy.”

Discuss with the child’s parents/guardians how they respond to questions. It won’t be the first time they have been asked. Also discuss this with the administration and other staff, as they will get questions too. Some basic things to discuss with parents/guardians include what name to use, what pronoun to use, professional language to use with administrators, educators and other parents/guardians and simple ways to answer other students’ questions based on the individual situation.

If you know that a student entering your class presents as a different gender than the child’s biological sex, check out some of the additional resources on gender in the comprehensive *Welcoming Schools Guide* to help give you the background to work with the child and family. See [Gender Identity and Stereotypes: Impact on Children \[PDF\]](#) or [Resources on Gender Identity \[PDF\]](#).

Sample responses:

- *There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress. There was a time when girls couldn’t wear pants to school and now they can. Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.*
- *Sandy has always felt like a girl deep down inside. So that is just the way she likes to dress.*

5. “Aren’t the students too young to learn what ‘gay’ means?” (When talking with a parent? When talking with a colleague?)

Sample responses:

- *In elementary school, learning the meaning of “gay” or “lesbian” can come up in a couple of contexts — families, name-calling and current events.*
- *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 adults who fall in love with other adults of the same sex.*
- *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.*
- *Students also see the words “lesbian” or “gay” or “bisexual” or “transgender” as headlines at the grocery store checkout counter. They overhear them in the news. Then they come into class and ask what they mean.*

It's often helpful to use illustrations, as in the following responses:

- *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 and 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 they have and grow up in helps students see the common threads that run through caring families: love and concern for children.*
- *Some kids came into class one morning and were talking about the People magazine cover "Lance Bass (formerly of 'N Sync) Is Gay!" They were giggling. Finally a girl came over to me and asked, "What does that mean?"*
- *Two boys were sent to my office this morning for pushing each other around when one of them said, "Get out of my way, faggot." When I asked them if they knew what it meant, they paused and one finally said, "It means stupid."*

"Dozens of parents flooded the Methuen school system with phone calls yesterday after a local newspaper reported that a fourth-grade girl had returned from the February school break requesting to be treated as a boy.

The child's parents told school officials that he had always considered himself a boy, rejecting feminine dress and name, and they were agreeing to raise him as a male.

Many parents sought reassurance that "this wasn't just some frivolous happening with the youngster," said Superintendent Phillip Littlefield. "There is a medical condition that exists here, and this is not something irresponsible on the part of the parents. These are wonderful parents who care very, very deeply about their child."

Most parents who called, however, simply wanted to know which bathroom the child uses, according to Littlefield, who said he told them the youngster uses a separate bathroom, and people say, "Oh, wow, that's cool."

Littlefield said the child has asked to be called a masculine version of his name, which the superintendent declined to disclose, upon the family's request. Other than that, nothing has changed, he said, and most of the 1,100 students at the Comprehensive Grammar School are taking the situation in stride...

For the kids who aren't close to him, it was Phyllis and now it's Phillip," said Littlefield, using other names for examples. "And it's OK. They want to know what's for lunch.... I think sometimes when we don't understand something completely, we sort of react with fear," Littlefield said. "And this is a nice little kid. This is the same youngster that's been in the fourth grade all year.'"

- Superintendent Phillip Littlefield, Methuen Public Schools, Mass. in an interview with the *Boston Globe*, March 5, 2005.¹

WHAT DOES ‘GAY’ MEAN?

There is not one right answer:

Many people have grown up without hearing the words “gay” or “lesbian.” Therefore, you may not be sure how to respond when a student asks you what the words mean. It is better to try to answer than to respond with silence or evade the question. Practice different responses with colleagues, just as you practice other things that you want to learn. Figure out what you feel comfortable saying. Responses will vary by age and developmental stage of the student. Your comfort in answering these questions will set a welcoming tone in your class and school community.

Keep it simple:

An answer can be as simple as: “‘Gay’ means when a man loves a man or a woman loves a woman.” Try to answer the question honestly without overloading a student with information. Throughout elementary school, a student’s ability to understand what “gay” means and what your explanation means may increase with development.

Focus on love and relationships:

A discussion with elementary-age students about the meanings of “gay” or “lesbian” is a discussion about love and relationships. You can just clarify that people love each other in different ways. Some women love and want to be partners with a man and some women love and want to be partners with a woman. It can be helpful to give concrete examples, such as “Tanya and Angela love each other, and they want to be family to each other.”

Understand what the student is asking:

If a second-grader says to you, “Alexia said that Ricardo is gay. What does ‘gay’ mean?” You could begin with, “Do you know why Alexia said that?” Or a student could say, “I heard that Omar’s dad is gay. What does that mean?” Listening first gives you a good idea of what your student wants to know and needs to know. Will your answer be about name-calling, defining what it means to be gay, different kinds of families or some combination of answers?

Think about what messages you want to share:

- All people deserve respect.

- Making fun of people by calling them “gay” (or “sissy,” “queer,” etc.) is hurtful. It can hurt both the student who is the target and anyone who hears it who may have a gay relative or friend.
- Using the name of any group of people as an insult is not OK, because it is most often based on negative stereotypes of that group.
- People can fall in love and want to be partners with people of the same gender or with people of a different gender.

Be direct:

Sometimes educators want to dodge a question about gay people with a response such as “The word gay means happy.” While that IS one meaning, if that is the extent of the response, students will know that this is a topic that brings up discomfort.

SAMPLE RESPONSES TO: “WHAT DOES GAY MEAN?”

- A person who loves, in a very special way, someone who is the same gender. For example, a gay man wants to be involved with and love another man. A gay person may choose to have a special relationship with someone and share a home and have a family together.
- A man who loves another man or a woman who loves another woman in a romantic way.
- When a person grows up and they fall in love or want to fall in love with a person of the same gender.
- “Gay” can refer to either men or women but it is sometimes used just to refer to gay men. Women who are gay are also called “lesbians.”
- A lesbian is a woman who loves another woman in a very special way.
- A lesbian is a woman who wants to be in a romantic relationship with another woman.
- A woman who wants to be partners with and make a family with another woman.

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’s not OK to use that phrase.”
- “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?”

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

EDUCATE:

- If you have been hearing the phrase “That’s so 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 it as an insult.
- Be clear with students that when they use the word “gay” in a negative way they are being disrespectful. Also be clear that using the phrase “That’s so gay” is hurtful to other students who may have parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, neighbors, friends or other family members who are gay.
- In lessons on respect, stereotypes or prejudice include information about discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

BE PROACTIVE:

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your class and school.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against name-calling and hurtful teasing.
- If you have been hearing the phrase “That’s so gay” in your class or 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 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 in handling it.

DON’T EXCUSE THE BEHAVIOR:

- Saying “Josh doesn’t really know what it means,” or “Sarah was only joking,” excuses hurtful behavior.

DON’T TRY TO JUDGE HOW UPSET THE TARGET WAS:

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

DON’T BE IMMOBILIZED BY FEAR:

- Making a mistake is far less serious than not acting at all. You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.

GENDER AND CHILDREN: A PLACE TO BEGIN FOR EDUCATORS



Children receive formal and informal messages about gender from a multitude of sources — their families, their peers, their communities and the media. Many of the messages empower them, and many of the messages limit them. It is important for all children to see the range of human behaviors as possible and positive ways to be, regardless of their genders.

Television, movies and toys are examples of places in our culture that divide the world into male-appropriate and female-appropriate behaviors.

At school, it is important for educators to create gender-expansive environments where children can be whole by expressing every part of their personality: their strengths, their emotions, their quiet side, their active side, their introspective self and their extroverted self.

Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for all educators.

Below is a list of guidelines and ideas for expanding possibilities for girls and boys with suggestions for working with gender.

GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS

- Create a safe, gender-expansive space for children. An atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom and school affirms all children and allows them to express their interests.
- Expand children's range of possibilities through literature. Review stories, books, games and other messaging for gender stereotypes. Include books in your classroom and school library that show a wide range of activities, emotions and achievements for all children.
- Provide role models for both girls and boys that show a wide range of occupations and achievements. Read biographies, develop classroom or hallway displays and invite guest speakers who expand children's vision of ways to achieve and thrive.
- Look at the individual qualities and gifts each child brings to your classroom. Do not automatically accept assumptions of what is appropriate behavior for boys or for girls.
- Provide opportunities for students to look at the qualities that all children share and to think about the messages they receive about male and female identity.
- Develop classroom messages that emphasize “All children can...” rather than “Boys don’t..., Girls don’t...” Emphasize the inclusive term “children.”
- Instead of organizing children by gender, “Boys do that, and girls do this,” organize students by different categories, such as: students whose birthdays fall between January and July, students whose last names begin with A-H and those whose last names begin with I-Z, or students who are sitting in a particular part of the room, etc.
- Encourage children to find activities that they enjoy and that respect their interests. This will help them connect to other children with similar interests and fit in socially.

- Interrupt hurtful teasing and name-calling. When students use words like “gay,” “sissy,” “girl,” “tomboy” or “queer” as put-downs, they are using these words to hurt, exclude, intimidate or bully. To create a safe atmosphere, ensure this kind of talk is stopped.
- Be aware of and intervene when students are policing each other on gender. If a child says to a young boy, “Bobby, that’s a girl’s shirt/toy,” or “You run like a girl,” or, to a young girl, “You look like a boy,” interrupt the behavior. Emphasize that it is OK for children to dress in ways that they feel comfortable.
- Children are more resilient and able to cope when they feel that someone understands them and is on their side. Let students know that you see their strengths and that you can appreciate their unique qualities.
- Be ready to support parents of children who are gender variant. Many parents will be deeply concerned about their child. Use language that supports their child. Help parents see their child’s strengths whether they are academic, artistic, athletic, dramatic or interpersonal. Model inclusive and expansive language for other parents who comment about a particular child.
- Identify support systems for you and children within the school. Create community. Talk with other teachers, counselors and administrators. Agree on professional and developmentally appropriate language when discussing children’s gender expression.
- Be aware of whether students feel safe outside of the classroom. In the lunchroom? Recess? Gym class? Special education classes? In the bathroom? On the school bus or at bus stops? Engage the adults in charge of these areas in a conversation about gender expression.
- Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices, such as boys lining up here and girls lining up there.
- Avoid using the phrase “boys and girls” as a way to address your class. Try to use more inclusive phrases to address the class as a whole like children, students, learners, young people or Room No. ___. You can also choose a name for your class that brings to mind positive attributes — like the Dolphins, Owls or Peacemakers.
- Establish a gender-neutral bathroom in your school that students can use, such as one in the nurse’s office.
- Become aware of any negative gender-related messages that you received, so you do not pass on messages that limit a child’s potential and development.
- Be prepared to raise questions in team meetings. Find colleagues who are similarly committed to assuring a gender-expansive school. Create a community of adult learners.
- Remember you are not alone. Other teachers are facing similar issues.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE

- [Our Favorites: Looking at Gender Through Books](#)
- [Gender Identity and Stereotypes: The Impact on Children \[PDF\]](#)
- [A Look at Research on Prejudice and Stereotypes \[PDF\]](#)
- [Resources on Gender Roles and Stereotypes \[PDF\]](#)
- [Resources on Gender Identity \[PDF\]](#)
- [Annotated Bibliographies from Welcoming Schools](#)
- [An Example of Partnering with Schools to Support Children with Gender Variant Behaviors and Interests \[from www.hrc.org\]](#)

A NOTE ON MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S DAYS



"In kindergarten, there are Muffins for Moms and Donuts for Dads days, and then obviously there are times when two moms show up or two dads, but it isn't discussed."

- Minneapolis pilot site educator

Mother's and Father's Days can be one way to celebrate and honor parents. However, not all children come from families with both a mother and a father. Some children come from families with two moms or two dads. Some may have a parent who died. Some

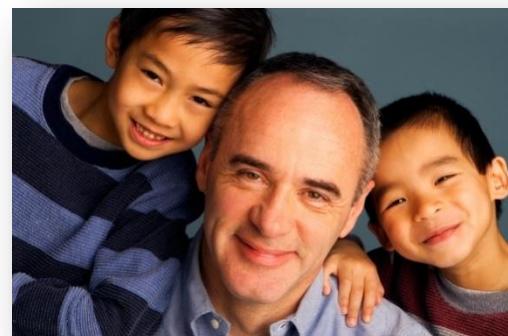
children are raised by grandparents or other caring adults. When Mother's and Father's Days are celebrated at school, they can be anxiety-provoking and painful for some children. Teachers need to consider the family configurations of the children in their class.

Mother's and Father's Days can be used as an opportunity to discuss honoring or appreciating your elders. They can also be used as an opportunity to discuss all adults who raise children and all kinds of families. When teachers acknowledge that children live in different kinds of families, students who don't have both a mother and a father will be more likely to feel included. When a child feels seen and understood at school, he or she will feel more connected to school and do better academically and emotionally.

At school, teachers often acknowledge the holidays by reading books about mothers and fathers. These holidays can be an opportunity to discuss the many kinds of families and the many caring adults who are in children's lives. For some children, this will be an opportunity to learn about diverse families. For some children, it will be an opportunity to see that their families are acknowledged in the school.

As Mother's and Father's Days are always on the weekend, you can leave the making of cards and the celebrations for the children to do at home. Parents cherish all the drawings or other things their children have made that they have said were made especially for them. In fact, many parents are often more touched by gifts or cards that their children have made that were not just made at the prompting of a teacher for Mother's Day or Father's Day.

If you decide to make cards or gifts in your class, make sure that you talk about and model choices. For example, on Mother's Day, students could make something for their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, guardians or other women who are important to them. This option, however, is only a partial



solution as a student without a mother in the home or a student with two mothers at home is still aware that most students are making something for their mothers or just one mother.

Making something in the classroom will still present challenges to some children. The key is being sensitive to the issues and helping those children who need it, so that they do not have to handle the challenges presented to them alone.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Rigoberto Gonzalez & Cecilia Alvarez, *Antonio's Card / La Tarjeta de Antonio*, 2005. (Bilingual) (1 – 4). Teachers Guide: <http://www.childrensbookpress.org/our-books/latino/antonios-card>

Todd Parr, *The Family Book*, 2004. (Pre-K – K).

Susan Kuklin, *Families*, 2006. (K – 5).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Sudie Hofmann, “Framing the Family Tree: How Teachers Can Be Sensitive to Students’ Family Situations,” *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 2005 (p. 20). Available at: www.rethinkingschools.org.

RESOURCES

SUPPORTIVE RESOLUTIONS

AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

“Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations regardless of ethnic/racial status, age, economic status, special needs, English as a second language or other language group, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity and appearance.”⁵⁰

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

“AFT has a proud history and a long-standing record in the fight for the elimination of discrimination and stereotyping based on race, gender, immigration status, physical disabilities, ethnicity and sexual orientation.”⁵¹

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

“Schools must use education to bridge the divides caused by the deepest differences between groups of people. This requires serious attention to teaching about differences such as language, culture and religion, as well as exploring areas of shared understanding. Schools must develop and foster civil cultures, democratic communities and practices that respect diversity in all its forms.”⁵²

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

“Principals must provide leadership within the school community in developing programs aimed at creating constructive and cooperative relationships, teaching tolerance and appreciating similarities and differences among all people. ...”⁵³

“NAESP recognizes that changing societal attitudes have produced a variety of family patterns... NAESP urges administrators to maintain a school climate supportive of all children and families, regardless of family patterns. ...”⁵⁴

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES

“All students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity are entitled to equal opportunities in the educational system. ... The school nurse should be actively involved in fostering a safe environment, demonstrating an understanding of the issues and modeling respect for diversity.”⁵⁵

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

“Schools can only be truly safe when every student, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is assured of access to an education without fear of harassment, discrimination or violence.”⁵⁶

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

“It is the responsibility of all teachers to prepare students for citizenship in a diverse society ...
RESOLVED, that the NCTE ... urge NCTE members to address the needs of LGBT students, as well as children of LGBT families, and to incorporate LGBT issues in their work.”⁵⁷

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

“A safe and effective school has a positive environment in which education employees, students, parents/guardians and the community care for, communicate with, respect, understand and trust each other.”⁵⁸ And “...plans, activities and programs for education employees, students, parents/guardians and the community should be developed to ... increase respect, understanding, acceptance and sensitivity toward individuals and groups in a diverse society composed of such groups as American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, women, GLBT persons and people with disabilities.”⁵⁹

NATIONAL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

“Continued respect for, and expansion of civil rights requires they be defended whenever threatened and that children and youth be taught the significance of civil rights and responsibilities in American culture. ... National PTA supports: Prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, age, physical and academic ability and sexual orientation.”⁶⁰

NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION

“NSBA believes that school boards should ensure that students and school staff are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of socioeconomic status, race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation. ... The total school environment, including its curriculum, should reflect and encourage respect for the multicultural nature of the world.”⁶¹

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

“Students should be able to attend school without fear of threat, harassment or denial of rights. To achieve this positive school climate, SSWAA supports educating both students and staff regarding misconceptions about GLBQ youth, appropriate ways to address discrimination and harassment and the importance of mutual respect.”⁶²

ALSO AVAILABLE IN WELCOMING SCHOOLS:

- [Supportive Resolutions: Same-Gender Parenting \[PDF\]](#)
- [Supportive Resolutions from National Health Organizations Regarding Safe Schools and Sexual Orientation & Youth \[PDF\]](#)

LAWS & POLICIES THAT SUPPORT WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Looking at supportive laws and policies from other school districts or states can help you figure out the strengths and weaknesses of laws and policies in your own district and state. If you can't find them in your school district or state, then this section can give you ideas about what you can do to advocate for help in creating welcoming schools for all children.

For more information see the extended version of [Laws and Policies that Support Welcoming Schools \[PDF\]](#) that includes information about:

- Federal Laws
- Safe School Laws
- Human Rights and Civil Rights Laws
- Laws or Policies Against Harassment and Bullying
- Local School District Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policies
- Character Education Laws
- Professional Codes of Ethics
- School and Curriculum Standards
- Parental Notification/Opt-In & Opt-Out laws
- Examples of Case Law — The Financial Impact of Discrimination
- Additional Resources on Laws that Support *Welcoming Schools*

Also available at *Welcoming Schools* is [Legal Resources for Digging Deeper \[PDF\]](#).

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICIES

Some school districts have policies that make general statements about creating a respectful learning environment for all students, all school districts have non-discrimination policies to comply with federal law, and some districts specifically list additional categories to help ensure that all students are not discriminated against or harassed.

Take a look at your own local policies and, if you do not think they are adequate, talk with others about improving these policies. Here are some examples of inclusive policies:

Knox County Board of Education, Tennessee

Student Policy on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying:⁶³

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture, written on paper or electronically, verbal, physical or psychological act ... that is motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or, by any other distinguishing characteristic; and, a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of harming an individual; ... or, has the effect of insulting or demeaning any individual or group.”

Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, Ariz.

Non-Discrimination/Equal Opportunity⁶⁴

“The Board is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in relation to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, language of origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or marital status. Unless expressly superseded by controlling federal or state statutes, regulations or court decisions, this policy will prevail in all matters concerning staff members, students, the public, educational programs and services and individuals with whom the Board does business.

“La Junta Directiva está comprometida a tener una política no discriminatoria con relación a raza, color, religión, sexo, edad, nacionalidad, lengua de origen, incapacidad, orientación sexual, identidad o expresión de género o estado civil. A menos que sea reemplazada expresamente por los estatutos federales o estatales gobernantes, por reglamentos o por decisiones de la corte, esta política prevalecerá en todos los asuntos concernientes a los miembros del personal, los estudiantes, el público, los programas y servicios educativos y los individuos con quienes la Junta Directiva tenga negocios.”

CURBING HARASSMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS CAN PREVENT LAWSUITS

Most lawsuits related to discrimination and harassment in schools come from high school students. However, many of these students recall that they were first targeted for harassment in elementary school. These early experiences have been cited by jurists, as in the 2007 ruling by the New Jersey’s Supreme Court which stated 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. ... Students in the classroom are entitled to no less protection from unlawful discrimination and harassment than their adult counterparts in the workplace. ... We require school districts to implement effective preventive and remedial measures to curb severe or pervasive discriminatory mistreatment.”⁶⁵ The school district was fined and required to pay both the boy and his mother a financial settlement.⁶⁶

TALKING WITH THE MEDIA

- Be clear that you are using the *Welcoming Schools Guide* so that adults can take responsibility for student safety and create a welcoming school environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive.
- Develop core messages on why *Welcoming Schools* is important for your schools. Use these core messages to help you talk with the media and others. Formulate two or three key messages or phrases and do not hesitate to use them repeatedly in conversation with the press. (See [Why Discuss Family Diversity, Teasing, Name-Calling and Gender?](#) for ideas.)
- If you can only get one sentence in when talking with the press, talk about your values and why *Welcoming Schools* is important for children.
- This work is about family, respect, and safety. Be clear that at the elementary school level this work is not about sex or sexuality. You do not need to repeat distorted accusations if asked about them. Even if a reporter keeps pressing you, just keep repeating what the work is really about.
- It is best to avoid repeating inflammatory words. Even if the media or others call *Welcoming Schools* “controversial” or use negative words to describe it, just keep talking about it in the positive and keep saying what good it will do. Emphasize the concept of “welcoming.”
- People can get overwhelmed by a lot of facts. Use facts sparingly. People connect more with the values behind this work and people’s stories about the need for or the effectiveness of creating welcoming schools.
- Explain why you and the audience are on the same side. Remember the “audience” when talking to the press is not the reporter but the people watching the news or reading the paper.
- Think ahead about the types of questions you might be asked. Develop responses. Think about why this work is important in your school or school district. Think about what prompted you to work towards a more welcoming school.

We want to respect and welcome all students and all families in [our] community to ensure that our students thrive. Our families are diverse and include people who are mixed race, single parents, adoptive parents, gay and lesbian parents, immigrants, foster parents, grandparents and others.

Schools must be a place where children can learn and grow without hurtful bullying or name-calling. Welcoming Schools work will help to ensure that our students reach their fullest potential in an environment free of bullying and gender stereotyping.

Welcoming Schools is one more way that our schools are embracing and encouraging the active participation of caretakers and parents. When they’re involved, included and welcomed, so are their children.

The Welcoming Schools training helps improve staffs’ cultural responsibility and commitment. Students benefit when staff work together to create a welcoming climate.

- Core messages developed in *Welcoming Schools* pilot site to explain why their district/school planned to do welcoming schools work.

- Practice responding to the media. Practice giving concise responses. Practice using your core messages to respond to controversial questions. Practice staying positive.
- Ensure that the public is informed of the depth of community support for *Welcoming Schools*.
- Connect the goals of *Welcoming Schools* with school mission statements, strategic goals and initiatives related to social and emotional learning – for example, anti-bullying initiatives, Second Step or Open Circle.
- Connect *Welcoming Schools* to values that many people share — such as the *opportunity* for children to learn in a safe environment, the *opportunity* for all children to reach their fullest potential, the *responsibility* we share in creating a safe school environment for all students, the *responsibility* to create a school where all students can thrive.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Talking with the media and community members about a school initiative that might be controversial is a skill that most school administrators have developed. To help them speak about *Welcoming Schools* remind them of what they have learned from past controversies and ensure that they are:

- Well-versed in how the goals of *Welcoming Schools* link to their school's mission and academic goals
- Prepared for specific types of concerns that may be raised
- Aware of the support for *Welcoming Schools* work in the community

THE POWER OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Welcoming Schools was developed because parents and teachers saw ways in which children were hurt by name-calling and the invisibility of certain families in schools.

- In community forums or media coverage, it is critical that the voices of local families be included. Work with a diverse group of parents that represents a variety of families including some combination of LGBT and non-LGBT parents, single parents, adoptive parents, etc.
- Hearing from a family whose children have struggled to feel safe about being open about their family or who have felt excluded from classroom lessons can be very powerful.
- Hearing how devastating name-calling and bullying related to bias and stereotypes is also powerful.

Include some examples of when your school has handled situations well. For example, if hurtful name-calling was stopped or a child and their family were accepted, describe these situations and praise the people involved. Sometimes groups of parents with concerns work with media to create controversy related to LGBT parents or topics in schools. If this happens:

- Invite these parents to speak with administration about *Welcoming Schools* and invite them to review the materials.
- Listen carefully to their concerns. Look for opportunities to foster dialogue in a respectful manner.

- Work to find common ground: What can we all agree is important for children? What do all parents want for their children?
- Stick with the positive. Even if others try to label the work as controversial or negative, focus on the ways that this work helps ensure safety, respect and a welcoming school where all children can learn.
- See [Responding to Concerns about Being LGBT-Inclusive](#) for more ideas on how to respond to questions.

Concerned parents may refer to materials that are not a part of *Welcoming Schools*, materials that may be more controversial. Ensure that materials shown to the media, school boards or the school administration really are *Welcoming Schools* material. (Also note that the materials in *Welcoming Schools* were developed for use in many different communities. It helps to be clear where you will start with in your community.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN THE WELCOMING SCHOOLS GUIDE

- [Inclusive Schools and Communities: Relevant Research](#)
- [Using the Welcoming Schools Guide in the Era of No Child Left Behind](#)
- [Laws and Policies that Support Welcoming Schools](#)

USING LGBT-INCLUSIVE CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND BOOKS ABOUT GENDER ROLES

BEFORE READING A BOOK TO YOUR CLASS

- Think about whether or not reading a book with two moms or two dads is the place to start in developing a welcoming school or whether you need to lay more groundwork in your school community?
- Consider whether you will have support from your school's administration if parental concerns arise regarding LGBT topics or gender roles.
- Prepare yourself to answer students' questions.
- Discuss families with LGBT parents in the context of the range of family diversity that exists in our schools and communities.
- Look at how whether reading the book fits into school curriculum, such as:
 - Social studies units on family
 - Units on understanding and respecting others
 - Reading and discussing diverse literature
- See how the book can help meet social and emotional goals you have for your classroom, such as:
 - Building community in your classroom
 - Developing student self-esteem
 - Developing an awareness of diversity while at the same time understanding commonalities between people and families
- Attend or hold a professional development workshop on LGBT topics or gender in elementary school such as the one from *Welcoming Schools* called *Have You Ever Thought About How You Might Respond: Practicing Responses to Students' and Parents'/Guardians' Questions About LGBT Topics and Gender:* ([Introductory version](#) or [Expanded version \[PDF\]](#)).
- If there are students with LGBT parents/guardians in your class or in your school, it is useful to find out the language that they use to refer to their families to help answer other students' questions that may arise.
- If there is a student in your class that presents their gender in a different way than their biological sex or who strongly prefers toys and activities typically associated with the other gender, discuss with their parents/guardians how they talk about it with their child and with other children or adults.

- To prepare for discussions on gender, look at some of the books on gender and children in the Bibliography for Educators and Parents/Guardians or check out some of the articles and resources on gender identity and children on the *Welcoming Schools* website.
- If there is only one student in your school who you know has LGBT parents/guardians, be careful not to continually single him or her out as an example.

LGBT-INCLUSIVE CHILDREN'S BOOKS*

One way to make children feel welcome in your classroom and school is to ensure that all kinds of families are portrayed in the books that are available in the classroom and in the library. It is important for children to see their reality reflected to them through the literature that is available and used in classrooms. It is also important for all students to understand that while all families are unique, they share many common values, beliefs and traditions.

The LGBT-inclusive books that we recommend for schools were chosen because:

- They portray the characters in the books as just one way that families and people exist in this world.
- They do not highlight having lesbian or gay parents as an issue or a problem for the children.
- They may just have “kid appeal” such as stories in “The Duke who Outlawed Jelly Beans” by Johnny Valentine or “Best, Best Colors” by Eric Hoffman.

There is, however, still a shortage of well-written and illustrated books that just happen to have children with LGBT parents as characters in the book.

A NOTE ON BOOKS THAT INTRODUCE FAMILIES WITH TWO MOMS OR TWO DADS AS AN “ISSUE”

Historically, many of the books written for children that include two moms or two dads have focused on a problem that children have encountered because they have two moms or dads. Others have dealt with issues or fears that adults or children may have with lesbian and gay people. Many of these books are still listed on other bibliographies for children. The bibliographies in *Welcoming Schools* generally *do not* include these kinds of books.

Books that highlight problems may actually introduce negative concepts that young children do not already have. At the same time, these books may frighten children who have two moms or two dads by planting the idea in their minds that other kids will tease them because of their family structure.

In the younger grades in particular, many children may ask questions of a child who has two moms or two dads. Children have a natural curiosity about something that they are not familiar with. However, these questions are often as simple as: “How come you have two moms?” “Is that other man your uncle?” “Is that woman your babysitter?” The more these matters are discussed openly and deliberately in the classroom, the less an individual child will have to answer questions in private.

Unless children have heard disparaging remarks from other kids, through the media or at home, they are not likely to tease a fellow kindergartner or first-grader about his or her family. Teasing about a

child's family may arise as children get older, when their classmates have heard degrading comments about LGBT people outside of school.

If teasing of a student with LGBT parents/guardians has already been an issue, one of the more recent children's books to address this problem is *In Our Mothers' House*, by Patricia Polacco. Some of the books for older elementary children that are included in this bibliography do raise some of the issues that may arise for children with two moms. As students get older they can have more discussions about what they read.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES AVAILABLE THROUGH *WELCOMING SCHOOLS*

- [Books for Students Inclusive of LGBT Family Members and Characters \[PDF\]](#)
- [All Kinds of Families \[PDF\]](#) recommends books that show many different family structures and ways that families come to be — adoptive families, multiracial families, grandparents caring for children, single parents, two-mom or two-dad families and many others.
- Looking at Gender Through Books:
 - [Picture books \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Early Readers \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Chapter Books \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Biographies – Women \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Biographies – Men \[PDF\]](#)
 - [Fairytales and Stories \[PDF\]](#)
- [Books for Elementary-Age Children on Hurtful Teasing, Name-Calling and Bullying \[PDF\]](#) recommends books that look at the role of bystanders, developing empathy, ways to handle yourself in the face of teasing and bullying, and the role of prejudices in name-calling.
- [An Annotated Bibliography for Educators and Parents/Guardians \[PDF\]](#) includes sections on Understanding LGBT People, LGBT Topics and Schools, Gender Identity, Gender Stereotypes/Roles, Bullying/Name-calling and Diversity Guides.
- [DVDs and Videos on LGBT Topics for Digging Deeper \[PDF\]](#)



* Our partnership with Two Lives Publishing makes it easy for you to build your *Welcoming Schools* library, for your school or your home. Whether you start with one book, or select a pre-bundled “starter kit,” Two Lives will donate a percentage of the sales to help support *Welcoming Schools*. To learn more or to purchase books included in the *Welcoming Schools* bibliography, visit www.twolives.com.

OUR FAVORITES: BOOKS FOR STUDENTS INCLUSIVE OF LGBT FAMILY MEMBERS AND CHARACTERS

PRE-K TO GRADE 2

And Tango Makes Three / Tres Con Tango, Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2005.

Spanish edition, Lectorum Publications, 2006 (Pre-K – 2).

Antonio's Card / La Tarjeta de Antonio, Rigoberto Gonzales & Cecilia Alvarez, Children's Book Press, Bilingual, 2005 (1 – 4).

Best, Best Colors / Los Mejores Colores, Eric Hoffman, Redleaf Press, Bilingual, 1999 (Pre-K – 2).

Buster's Sugartime, Marc Brown, Little, Brown, 2006 (K – 3).

The Different Dragon, Jennifer Bryan & Danamarie Hosler (Illustrator), Two Lives Publishing, 2006 (Pre-K – 2).

The Duke Who Outlawed Jelly Beans and Other Stories, Johnny Valentine & Lynette Schmidt (Illustrator), Alyson Books, 2004 (Pre-K – 3).

The Family Book, Todd Parr, Megan Tingley Publisher, 2004 (Pre-K – K).

Flying Free, Jennifer C. Gregg, BookSurge, LLC, 2005 (Pre-K – 1).

In Our Mothers' House, Patricia Polacco, Philomel, 2009 (1 – 5).

One Dad Two Dads, Brown Dad Blue Dads, Johnny Valentine, Alyson Books, 2004 (Pre-K – 2).

Uncle Bobby's Wedding, Sarah S. Brannen, Putnam Juvenile, 2008 (Pre-K – 2).



GRADES 3 TO 6

Holly's Secret, Nancy Garden, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000 (3 – 7).

The Manny Files, Christian Burch, Atheneum, 2006 (4 – 6).

The Misfits, James Howe, Aladdin Library, 2003 (6 – 9).

The Skull of Truth: A Magic Shop Book. Bruce Coville & Gary A. Lippincott (Illustrator), Pocket Books, 1999 (3 – 7).

The Trouble with Babies, Martha Freeman, Holiday House, 2002 (2 – 4).

The Van Gogh Café, Cynthia Rylant, Harcourt, 2006 (3 – 7).

FOR ALL AGES

Families, Susan Kuklin, Hyperion, 2006 (K – 5).

Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Families, Gigi Kaeser (Photographer) & Peggy Gillespie, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999 (K – adult).

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN HIGHLIGHTING ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

FAMILIES

All Families Are Special, Norma Simon, Albert Whitman & Co., 2003 (1 – 3).

The Family Book, Todd Parr, Megan Tingley Publisher, 2004 (Pre-K – K).

Hairs / Pelitos, Sandra Cisneros, Dragonfly Books, 1997 (Pre-K – 1).

The Keeping Quilt, Patricia Pollaco, Aladdin Paperbacks, 2001 (K – 3).

The Relatives Came, Cynthia Rylant, Pearson Learning, 1993 (Pre-K – 1).

Who's in a Family? Robert Skutch, Tricycle Press, 1997 (Pre-K – 1).

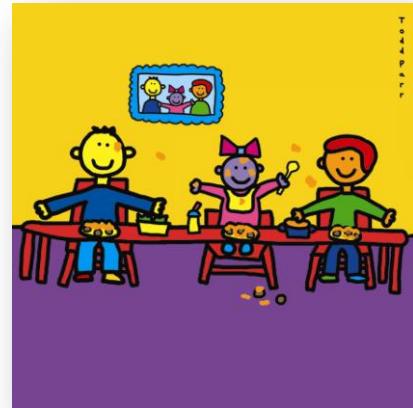


PHOTO ESSAYS ON FAMILIES

Families, Susan Kuklin. Hyperion, 2006 (K – 5).

Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Parents and Their Families, Gigi Kaeser (Photographer) & Peggy Gillespie, University of Massachusetts Press, 1999 (K – Adult).

Material World: A Global Family Portrait, Peter Menzel, Charles Mann & Paul Kennedy, Sierra Club Books, 1995 (All ages).

Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families. Peggy Gillespie & Gigi Kaeser (Photographer), University of Massachusetts Press, 1997 (K – Adult).

ADOPTION

A Mother for Choco, Keiko Kasza, Putnam Publishing Group, 1996 (Pre-K – 1).

Through Moon and Stars and Night Skies, Ann Turner, Harper Trophy, 1992 (Pre-K – 2).

We Belong Together: A Book About Adoption and Families, Todd Parr, Little, Brown Young Readers, 2007 (PreK – 1).

The White Swan Express: A Story About Adoption, Jean Davies Okimoto & Elaine M. Aoki, Clarion Books, 2002 (K – 3).

DIVORCE

Boundless Grace, Mary Hoffman, Puffin Books, 2000 (Pre-K – 2).

How Tia Lola Came to [Visit] Stay. Julia Alvarez, Knopf, 2001 (3 – 7).

Loon Summer, Barbara Santucci, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001 (K – 4).

Priscilla Twice, Judith Caseley, Greenwillow Books, 1995 (K – 4).

FOSTER CARE

Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care, Jennifer Wilcocki and Marcia Kahn Wright, American Psychological Association, 2002 (K – 3).

Our Gracie Aunt, Jacqueline Woodson, Jump at the Sun, 2002 (K – 4).

Zachary's New Home: A Story for Foster and Adopted Children, Geraldine Molettire Blomquist, Paul B. Blomquist & Margo Lemieux, Magination Press, 1991.(Pre-K – 1).

GRANDPARENTS

Mei-Mei Loves the Morning, Margaret Holloway Tsubakiyama, Albert Whitman & Co., 1999 (Pre-K – 1).

Muskrat Will be Swimming, Cheryl Savageau, Tilbury House, 2006 (K – 5).

The Patchwork Quilt, Valerie Flournoy, Puffin Books, 1995 (K – 3).

HOMELESSNESS

Fly Away Home, Eve Bunting, Clarion Books, 1993 (1 – 5).

The Lady in the Box, Ann McGovern, Turtle Books, 1999 (1 – 5).

A Single Shard, Linda Sue Park, Oxford University Press, 2006 (4 – 8).

INCARCERATED PARENTS

Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart, Vera B. Williams, HarperTrophy, 2004 (1 – 4).

Mama Loves Me from Away, Pat Brisson, Boyds Mills Press, 2004 (1 – 3).

Visiting Day, Jacqueline Woodson, Scholastic Press, 2002 (1 – 3).

MULTIRACIAL FAMILIES

Black, White, Just Right!, Marguerite W. Davol, Albert Whitman & Co., 1993 (Pre-K – 1).

I Love Saturdays y Domingos, Alma Flor Ada, Atheneum, 2002 (K – 2).

Throwing Shadows, E.L.Konigsburg, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1998 (4 – 8).

The Two Mrs. Gibsons, Toyomi Igus, Children's Book Press, 2001 (Pre-K – 2).

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Because of Winn Dixie, Kate DiCamillo, Candlewick Press, 2001 (4 – 7).

Love Is a Family, Roma Downey, Regan Books, 2001 (Pre-K – 2).

Mister and Me, Kimberly Willis Holt, Putnam Juvenile, 2000 (3 – 5).

The Van Gogh Café, Cynthia Rylant, Apple, 1999 (4 – 7).

SPECIAL NEEDS

Ian's Walk — A Story about Autism, Laurie Lears. Albert Whitman & Co., 2003 (1 – 3).

Mama Zooms, Jane Cowen-Fletcher, Scholastic, 1996 (Pre-K – K).

Rules, Cynthia Lord, Scholastic Press, 2006 (4 – 7).

Spider Sparrow, Dick King-Smith, Yearling, 2001 (3-6).

GAY OR LESBIAN PARENTS

And Tango Makes Three / Tres Con Tango, Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2005, Spanish ed., Lectorum Publications, 2006 (Pre-K – 2).

Antonio's Card / La Tarjeta de Antonio, Rigoberto Gonzales & Cecilia Alvarez, Children's Book Press, Bilingual, 2005 (1 – 4).

The Different Dragon, Jennifer Bryan & Danamarie Hosler (Illustrator), Two Lives Publishing, 2006 (Pre-K – 2).

Flying Free, Jennifer C. Gregg, BookSurge, LLC, 2005 (Pre-K – 1).

My Two Uncles, Judith Vigna, Albert Whitman & Co., 1995 (4 – 5).

One Dad Two Dads, Brown Dad Blue Dads, Johnny Valentine, Alyson Books, 2004 (Pre-K – 2).

The Trouble with Babies, Martha Freeman, Holiday House, 2002 (2 – 4).

DVD/ VIDEO

That's a Family Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen,! Women's Educational Media, 2001 (K – adult).

OUR FAVORITES: BOOKS ON FAMILIES, NAME-CALLING AND GENDER

FAMILY

All Families Are Special, Norma Simon, Albert Whitman & Co., 2003 (1 – 3).

Families, Susan Kuklin.Hyperion, 2006 (K – 5).

The Family Book, Todd Parr, Megan Tingley Publisher, 2004 (Pre-K – K).

Who's in a Family? Robert Skutch, Tricycle Press, 1997 (Pre-K – 1).



BOOKS ABOUT HURTFUL TEASING, NAME-CALLING AND BULLYING

Crow Boy, Taro Yashima, Diane Pub Co., 1983.

The Hundred Dresses, Eleanor Estes, Harcourt Paperbacks, 2004.

Just Kidding and Sólo Bromeando, Trudy Ludwig, Tricycle Press, 2006.

The Liberation of Gabriel King, K. L. Going, Puffin, 2007.

Muskrat Will Be Swimming, Cheryl Savageau, Tilbury House, 2006.

My Name Is Bilal, Asma Mobin-Uddin & Barbara Kiwak, Boyds Mills Press, 2005.

The New Girl ... and Me, Jacqui Robbins & Matt Phelan, Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books, 2006.

One, Kathryn Otoshi, KO Kids Books, 2008.

Say Something, Peggy Moss, Tilbury House Publishers, 2004.

Teammates, Peter Golenbock, Voyager Books, 1992.

Thank You, Mr. Falker, Patricia Polacco, Philomel, 2001.

LOOKING AT GENDER: PICTURE BOOKS

Amazing Grace, Mary Hoffman, Magi Publications, 2000.

Ballerino Nate, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, Dial Books for Young Readers, 2006.

The Different Dragon, Jennifer Bryan, Two Lives Publishing, 2006.

Drum, Chavi, Drum! / ¡Toca, Chavi, Toca!, Mayra L. Dole, Children's Book Press, 2003.

Kate and the Beanstalk, Mary Pope Osborne, Aladdin 2005.

The Seven Chinese Sisters, Kathy Tucker and Grace Lin, Albert Whitman & Co., 2007.

The Sissy Duckling, Harvey Fierstein, Aladdin, 2005.

Story of Ferdinand, Munro Leaf, Grosset & Dunlap, 2000.

Tomboy Trouble, Sharon Dennis Wyeth, Random House for Young Readers, 1998.

LOOKING AT GENDER: CHAPTER BOOKS

The Breadwinner, Deborah Ellis, Groundwood, 2000.

The Chalk Box Kid, Clyde Robert Bulla, Random House, 1987.

Pinky and Rex, James Howe, Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, 1998.

Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World, Mildred Pitts Walter, Yearling, 1990.

The Manny Files, Christian Burch, Atheneum, 2006.

Rickshaw Girl, Mitali Perkins, Charlesbridge, 2007.

Riding Freedom, Pam Muñoz Ryan, Blue Sky Press, 2002.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

UNDERSTANDING LGBT PEOPLE

Families of Value: Personal Profiles of Pioneering Lesbian and Gay Parents, Robert A. Bernstein, Marlowe and Company, 2005.

The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart, Peter J. Gomes, HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.

Is It a Choice? Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People, Eric Marcus, HarperSanFrancisco, Updated 2005.

Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Families, Peggy Gillespie (Editor) & Gigi Kaeser (Photographer), University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. www.familydiv.org.

What If Someone I Know Is Gay?: Answers to Questions About What It Means to Be Gay and Lesbian, Eric Marcus, Simon Pulse, Updated 2007.

LGBT TOPICS AND SCHOOLS

Gay Parents/Straight Schools: Building Communication and Trust, Virginia Casper & Steven B. Schultz, Teachers College Press, 1999.

Sexual Orientation & School Policy: A Practical Guide for Teachers, Administrators, and Community Activists, Ian K Macgillivray, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003.

When the Drama Club is Not Enough: Lessons from the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students, Jeff Perrotti & Kim Westheimer, Beacon Press., 2001.

GENDER

Boys and Girls Together: Improving Gender Relationships in K-6 Classrooms, Tamara Grogan, Stenhouse Publishers, 2003. www.responsiveclassroom.org.

More Than a Label: Why What You Wear or Who You're With Doesn't Define Who You Are, Aisha Muharrar, Free Spirit Publishing, 2002. www.freespirit.com.

Trans Forming Families: Real Stories About Transgendered Loved Ones, Mary Boenke (Editor), Oak Knoll Press, 2003.

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals, Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper, Cleis Press, 2008.

BULLYING / NAME-CALLING

The Bully-Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers K-8, Allan L. Beane, Free Spirit Publishing, 2005. www.freespirit.com.

Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents, Jane Bluestein, HCI, 2001.

Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention, Stan Davis, Julia Davis, Research Press, 2007.

The Respectful School: How Educators and Students Can Conquer Hate and Harassment, William Preble & Stephen Wessler, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2003.

DVDS AND VIDEOS

It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School, Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen, Women's Educational Media, DVD/VHS, 1996 (78 minutes or 38 minute-training version). Re-release in 2007 includes *It's STILL Elementary*. www.groundspark.org.

That's a Family! Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen, Women's Educational Media, DVD/VHS, 2000 (35 minutes). www.groundspark.org. Available in English and Spanish.

No Dumb Questions, Melissa Regan, VHS, 2003 (24 minutes). www.nodumbquestions.com, Three young sisters struggle to understand why and how their Uncle Bill is becoming a woman.

For more extensive and annotated bibliographies for educators and parents/guardians on the *Welcoming Schools* website see:

- [An Annotated Bibliography for Educators and Parents/Guardians \[PDF\]](#)
- [DVDs and Videos on LGBT Topics for Digging Deeper \[PDF\]](#)

APPENDICES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Below is a list of the materials available in the comprehensive *Welcoming Schools Guide*. Portions of the guide are available online at www.welcomingschools.org. For more information, or to request the comprehensive guide, e-mail welcomingschools@hrc.org.



FAMILY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

- *That's a Family!* An Evening Family Forum
- Is Your Family Like Mine? — A Panel of Parents/Guardians
- Answering Children's Tough Questions About Families — An Evening for Parents/Caring Adults and Educators
- Family Bookbags: A School-Wide Literature and Diversity Project

CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES — LEARNING TOGETHER

- Have You Ever Thought About How You Might Respond? Practicing Age-Appropriate Responses to Students' Questions About LGBT Topics (An expanded version)
- *Both of My Moms' Names Are Judy: Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents Speak Out*
- Viewing *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School*
- Stereotype Confirmation: A Look at Sexual Orientation, Race and Culture
- Cultivating Conversations About Differences
- Viewing *Out of the Past: LGBT History*
- Voices of Resilience, Voices of Accomplishment: Voices of LGBT People

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

- Questions Students May Ask and Possible Responses About LGBT People
- A Guide to Age-Appropriate Definitions for Students
- Definitions About Families
- Definitions of Key Words for Educators and Parents /Guardians
- Can Two Women or Two Men Get Married? Responding to Students' Questions
- Simple Ways to Incorporate Inclusive Material Across the Curriculum

CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY

- A Student Survey on Name-Calling
- Developing a Welcoming Classroom

LESSON PLANS: UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING FAMILY DIVERSITY

- What Is a Family? (Grades K – 3)
- Growing a Family Photo Tree (K – 2)
- *That's a Family!* A Film Showing and Activities (K – 2)
- Tree of Caring and Caring Community “Family Trees” (1 – 3)
- Family Diversity Photo Puzzle (1 – 3)
- A Fairytale About Children and Diverse Families (2 – 4)
- *That's a Family!* A Film Showing and Activities (3 – 5)
- Family Quilt — Community Art Project (3 – 5)
- Family Diversity Scavenger Hunt (4 – 5)
- How Are Stereotypes of Families Reinforced? (4 – 5)

LESSON PLANS: HELPING ALL CHILDREN TO THRIVE: LOOKING AT GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPING

- We Are All Human Beings (Grades K – 2)
- Kids Like ... (K – 1)
- Using Children’s Books to Look at Gender Stereotyping (1 – 3)
- Looking at Gender Stereotypes Through Fairytales (1 – 3)
- The Eagle Rider: A Look at Gender and Fairytales (2 – 3)
- Discussing Gender Stereotyping with Children’s Books (4 – 5)
- Fairytales for the Future, Composing a Song, Writing to an Author (4 – 5)
- Media Sleuths: Examining Gender Roles in Advertising (4 – 5)

LESSON PLANS: CREATING A RESPECTFUL SCHOOL BY ADDRESSING NAME-CALLING AND BULLYING

- A Welcoming Classroom (Grades K – 2)
- Words Can Hurt (K – 2)
- Creating Classroom Community (1 – 4)
- Words That Rip and Words That Repair (1 – 5)
- Name-Calling and Feeling Safe in School (3 – 5)
- Appreciating Differences & Acknowledging Stereotypes: Hot Potatoes & Bad Apples (4-5)
- I Was Just Kidding (4 – 5)
- Think Before You Act (4 – 5)
- Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander (4 – 5)

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- All Kinds of Families
- Books for Students Inclusive of LGBT Family Members and Characters
- Looking at Gender through Books:
 - Picture Books,
 - Early Readers,
 - Chapter Books,
 - Biographies of Women and Biographies of Men,
 - Folktales
- Hurtful Teasing, Name-Calling and Bullying
- Books for Educators and Parents/Guardians
- Videos and DVDs on LGBT Topics for Digging Deeper
- Safe School Guides with Resources for Elementary Schools

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Supportive Resolutions: Same-Gender Parenting
- Supportive Resolutions from National Health Organizations Regarding Safe Schools and Sexual Orientation and Youth
- A Look at Research on Prejudice and Stereotypes
- Gender Identity and Stereotypes: Impact on Children
- Legal Resources for Digging Deeper
- Resources on Bullying
- Resources: LGBT Parents/Guardians and Their Children
- Resources on Gender Roles and Stereotypes
- Resources on Gender Identity
- Additional Articles on LGBT Topics
- Marriage Equality Resources
- Welcoming Religious Resources
- Creating Community: Social and Emotional Learning Resources
- Recursos en Español / Resources in Spanish
- Educators Coming Out: Teaching and Being
- Prominent Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People
- Webliography: Websites with Extensive Online Resources

WELCOMING SCHOOLS PILOT AND EVALUATION RESULTS

"This school has always been accepting of diverse backgrounds, but now there is a bit more accountability and awareness of expectations on the part of faculty."

- Teacher from a pilot site

Evaluation is a critical component of any educational initiative. That's why *Welcoming Schools* is being piloted and evaluated in diverse school districts in three different states. We wanted to measure the experiences of different school communities that have implemented aspects of the *Welcoming Schools Guide*. We are happy to share with you the results of the first year of the pilot and the evaluation.

Twelve schools in five districts located in California, Massachusetts and Minnesota are participating in a three-year, mixed-method evaluation incorporating both an in-depth process evaluation (with qualitative components) and a traditional outcome evaluation (with quantitative components.) The majority of the participating schools are urban and have student populations that are diverse in terms of race, economics and family structure.

There are many ways to implement the contents of the *Welcoming Schools Guide*. The pilot criteria did not specify a certain scope or sequence of elements that each pilot school would use. Rather, each pilot school agreed to take part in implementing some key, core components of *Welcoming Schools*. These included formation of a *Welcoming Schools* Task Force composed of parents, educators and administrators; training for all school personnel; public meetings for parents and guardians; and use of several *Welcoming Schools* lesson plans. Each school or school district made decisions about how to use the *Welcoming Schools Guide* in a manner that met their own needs and linked with academic standards and emotional and social learning initiatives such as Second Step.

KEY SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

Pre- and post-pilot surveys of administrators and educators found:

- Positive improvement in school diversity climate. Almost 60 percent of the educators indicated that their school's climate around diversity was different in May than it was in the prior September
- Reduction in teachers' concerns regarding their own lack of training or resources from 54 percent to 30 percent
- Reduction in teachers' fears of parental dissatisfaction from 52 percent to 28 percent
- Positive difference in believing that children of every age could benefit from discussing gender roles and expression and families with LGBT parents
- Growth in positive intentions to address topics of diversity including families with LGBT parents and gender roles/expression in their classrooms and schools

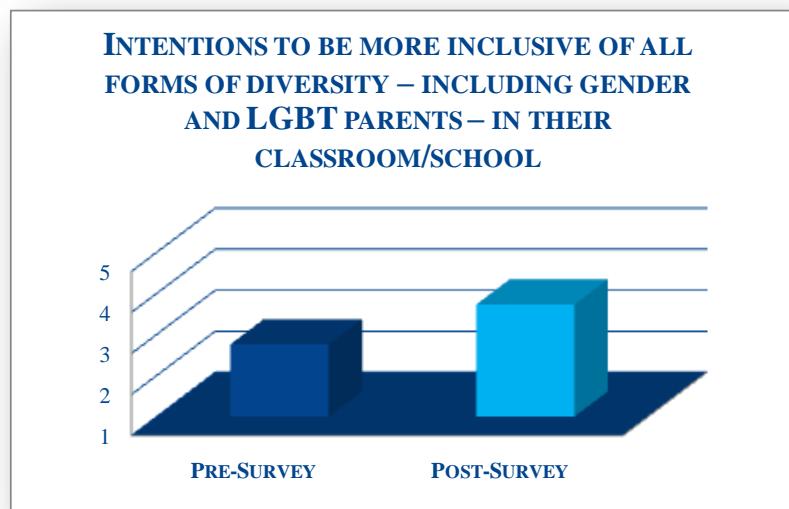
WHAT STUDENTS ARE PREPARED TO LEARN

"I'm very pleased with even the informal lessons I've seen in the classrooms. I've seen teachers discussing the three main parts of the program...and I can honestly say that I do believe the kids here do understand these three components..."

- School Administrator from a pilot site

Every school reported a positive difference in believing that students of every age could benefit from classroom discussions about gender roles and expression and families with LGBT parents, with a range of 2.49 – 3.94 on a 5-point scale where 1 means “no benefit at all” and 5 means “great deal of benefit.”

In interviews and focus groups, educators recognized the importance of answering students’ questions, such as the teacher who noted, *“Kids like to have discussions and be able to voice their opinions to adults because this could clear up any misconceptions children bring out.”*



In addition, the *Welcoming Schools* lesson plans were seen as a positive way of preparing students for middle school. As one educator explained, *“If you are not explicit, you will not prepare (the students) for middle school (where) victimization, raging hormones, and bigger kids all come into play and kids can get seriously hurt, whether physical or emotions (sic)”*.

WHAT ARE EDUCATORS PREPARED TO TEACH

“The staff taught more diversity lessons during the families program than in the past years. The lessons have had a positive effect on students' attitudes.”

- School administrator from a pilot site

All schools reported a significant change in positive intentions to address all forms of diversity — including gender and LGBT parents — with students. One school went from a 1.90 before the training to a 4.98 on a 5-point scale where 1 means “never will address and 5 means “will address in every way possible.

Administrator support and comfort with the program reflected not only their assessment of its potential contribution to building a positive school climate, but also their view of its substance and quality. In particular, they viewed the program as strong in its conceptual, developmentally based foundation; its flexibility in allowing for teacher judgment and application of teachable

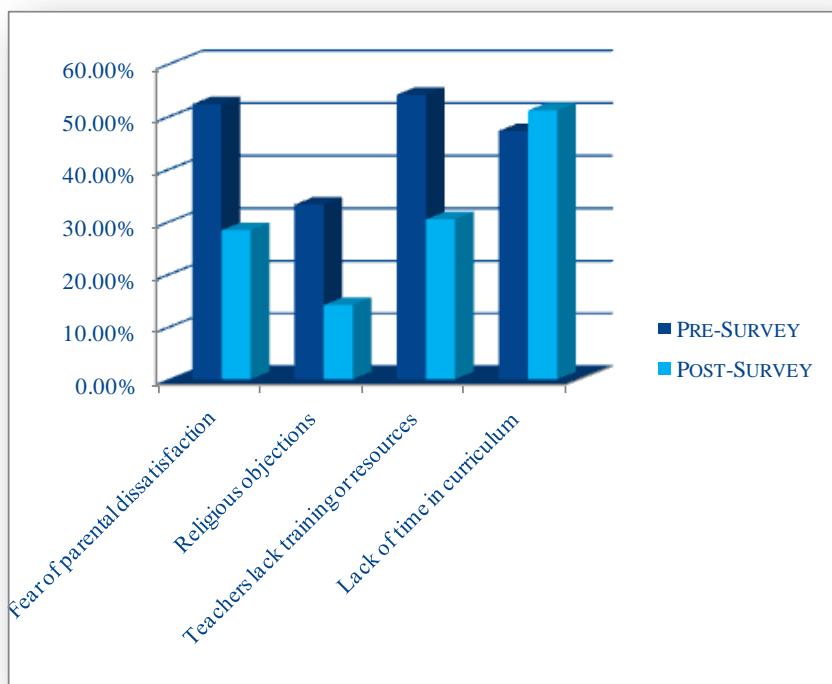
moments; and the ease with which it could be integrated with ongoing curriculum and standards. In essence, they felt that it was a program that respected teachers' professionalism.

OBSTACLES TO ADDRESSING LGBT TOPICS IN SCHOOL

Prior to the *Welcoming Schools'* implementation, more than half of school personnel indicated that the primary obstacles in addressing sexual orientation in their schools was a fear of parental dissatisfaction (52.3 percent) and their personal lack in training and resources (54.1 percent).

After implementation — which involved, importantly, not only training for the school faculty and staff, but also community meetings with parents and community leaders — less than a third of the teachers still feared parental dissatisfaction (28.3 percent) or were concerned about their own lack in training or resources (30.4 percent).

The *Welcoming Schools* community meetings with parents, teachers and school staff, local clergy and other interested parties contributed greatly in establishing or deepening the mutual trust between the parents and the schools, thus reducing the fear of parental dissatisfaction and objections based on religious teachings when dealing with topics related to sexual orientation. In addition, the in-service training for faculty and staff further addressed these concerns.



LESSONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

As we move forward, we can draw on many important lessons from this first pilot year evaluation. To be successful, parents and other community members in understanding and supporting *Welcoming Schools* and its core messages of respect and inclusivity. Second, the pre-existing climate of a school affects the implementation at every level of its process, and should be assessed carefully when beginning this work. Third, even with several trainings and meetings about *Welcoming Schools*, keeping all members of the school community engaged is an ongoing task. And finally, educators need support to address topics that might be unfamiliar to them or that create concerns about controversy.

BENEFITS OF THE *WELCOMING SCHOOLS* EVALUATION

While this summary only covers the first year of the evaluation, there are many benefits that have already been realized. The evaluation, as a whole, documents educators' and communities' perceived need in their schools. It also presents differences in school climates and school personnel's comfort in addressing all aspects of diversity with all school members.

Ultimately, the evaluation provides compelling evidence that *Welcoming Schools* is making a difference in children's lives and the lives of their families and communities.

Dr. Laura Szalacha from the University of Illinois at Chicago coordinated the evaluation and conducted the quantitative components. Qualitative evaluation was conducted by a team headed by Dr. Peter Goldblum at the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology; a team headed by Dr. Suzanne Pasch from Wheelock College; and Sheila Moriarty, M.A.

DID YOU KNOW?

1) In which animated feature would you hear the voice of someone who is gay in a lead role?

- a) Mulan
- b) Finding Nemo
- c) The Lion King
- d) All of the above
- e) None of the above

2) In which occupation might you find someone who is LGB?

- a) Professional football player
- b) Member of Congress
- c) Actor
- d) Sheriff
- e) All of the above
- f) None of the above

3) Which song was written by someone who is LGB?

- a) "West Side Story"
- b) "America the Beautiful"
- c) "Wake Me Up When September Ends"
- d) "Crocodile Rock"
- e) All of the above
- f) None of the above

4) Which famous person was LGBT?

- a) Alexander the Great
- b) George Washington Carver
- c) Joan of Arc
- d) Leonardo DaVinci
- e) Congresswoman Barbara Jordan
- f) All of the above
- g) None of the above

5) In which state legislature would you find someone who is lesbian or gay?

- a) Arkansas
- b) Oklahoma
- c) Minnesota
- d) Arizona
- e) Idaho
- f) All of the above
- g) None of the above

See [list of prominent LGBT people](#) who maybe familiar to or interesting to elementary age student [PDF].

6) In which professional sport/sport event might you find someone who is gay?

- a) Football
- b) Baseball
- c) Men's basketball
- d) Women's basketball
- e) Boxing
- f) Men's tennis
- g) Women's tennis
- h) Women's golf
- i) The Olympics
- j) All of the above
- k) None of the above

7) Which book was written by someone who is lesbian or gay?

- a) "Pinky and Rex" by James Howe
- b) "The Other Side" by Jacqueline Woodson
- c) "The Little Mermaid" by Hans Christian Anderson
- d) "Harriet the Spy" by Louise Fitzhugh
- e) All of the above
- f) None of the above

8) In which country would you find a government official who is gay?

- g) Brazil
- h) New Zealand
- i) South Africa
- j) Japan
- k) Germany
- l) All of the above
- m) None of the above

The answer for all of them is "All of the Above."

1) B.D. Wong as Shang in Mulan; Ellen DeGeneres as Dory in Finding Nemo; Nathan Lane as Timon in The Lion King. 2) Esera Tualo, David Kopay & Roy Simmons; Barney Frank & Tammy Baldwin; Rosie O'Donnell, George Takei, Drew Barrymore, Angelina Jolie, Lucy Liu, etc.; Lupe Valdez of Dallas County, Texas. 3) Leonard Bernstein, Katherine Lee Bates, Billie Joe Armstrong (of Green Day), Elton John. 4) All. 5) Arkansas – Kathy Webb, State Representative, District 37; Oklahoma – Al McCaffrey State House of Representatives, District 88; Minnesota – Paul Koering, State Senate, District 12; Idaho – Nicole LeFavour, State House of Representatives, 19th District ; Openly gay and lesbian legislators can also be found in Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Territory of Guam, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. 6) Esera Tualo, David Kopay & Roy Simmons; Glenn Burke & Billy Bean; John Amaechi; Sheryl Swoopes; Emile Griffith; Bill Tilden; Martina Navratilova; Rosie Jones; Greg Louganis and Rudy Galindo. 7) All of the books. 8) Brazil – Clodovil Hernandes, Chamber of Deputies, São Paulo; New Zealand – Maryan Street, Member of Parliament; South Africa – Edwin Cameron, Judge, Supreme Court of Appeal; Japan – Aya Kamikawa, Assembly Member; Germany – Klaus Wowereit, Mayor, Berlin. Openly gay and lesbian officials can also be found in Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

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ABOUT THE HRC FOUNDATION FAMILY PROJECT

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation envisions an America where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community. The Foundation's Family Project serves as a comprehensive resource on a wide range of issues including adoption, civil unions, custody and visitation, family law, marriage, parenting, schools, senior health and housing, state laws and legislation, and transgender issues. The HRC Family Project works on the following initiatives: All Children - All Families, the Healthcare Equality Index and *Welcoming Schools*. We are proud to offer *Welcoming Schools* as a resource for educators, school administrators, and parents as a means to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and name-calling, and to making schools welcoming to all.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

The *Welcoming Schools* National Advisory Board was established in 2007. Members serve as key advisers in the development and implementation of the *Welcoming Schools* program and provide leadership in educating the broader educational community about the importance of supporting LGBT students and families.

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¹ Organizations are named for identification purposes only.

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