



Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

Actions LGBTQ Parents/Guardians Can Take to Support Their Children in Elementary School

When children with LGBTQ parents or LGBTQ caring family members enter school, families wonder if their children will be safe, respected, and embraced by the school. Some schools are welcoming and very familiar with LGBTQ families while others are not. LGBTQ parents and family members can help the school to better understand their LGBTQ family as a part of the diversity that makes the school community strong.

With Your Child

- **Build resilience.** Help your child to feel proud of who they are and where they come from. Share stories and [read books](#) that reflect your family in a positive light.
- **Talk with your children about all kinds of families** — How families are alike and how they are different.
- **Talk with and model for your children** simple ways to answer questions about your family. In early elementary school, most [children's questions](#) about LGBTQ parents/guardians come from curiosity rather than prejudice.
- **Connect your child to other kids** who have LGBTQ parents/caring adults. Knowing that they are not alone and are, in fact, a part of a community of kids who have LGBTQ families will help your child gain pride and confidence in talking about their family.
- **You may fear** that your child will encounter prejudice at school because of your family. Young children do not assume that. To your children, your family is their family. That is what matters. Try not to pass on adult fears to your children.
- **Discuss with your children what, if any, support they want in school.** Do they want you to have a conversation with their teacher at the beginning of the school year about your family? If you volunteer in the school discuss how your child will feel if you are out?
- **Talk with your child and listen carefully** to see if other students are teasing them about your family. Talk through steps you or your child could take. Ask if they want your help in talking with a teacher or the principal if an incident arise (unless health and safety are at stake.)

With Your Child's Teacher

- **Help your child's teacher understand your family** and that like every other child they need acceptance, respect and understanding. Let them know how you talk about your family and what words your child calls you and other family members, such as "Daddy and Papa."
- **Ask your child's teacher:** Do they talk about [family diversity](#)? Are they inclusive of LGBTQ people? Can they change language to "family" or "caring adult" from "mom and dad" in letters home, when asking students to show their homework to someone at home, and when talking about families in general.
- **What do they do if they hear mean teasing or bullying** about [families](#), [gender put-downs](#) or [LGBTQ slurs](#)?

- **If your child's teacher feels unprepared** to answer other students' questions about your family or LGBTQ people, help them out with handouts from Welcoming Schools [Responding to Questions About LGBTQ Topics](#).
- **Show your child's teacher and media specialist**, lists with [up-to-date, recommended books](#) on family diversity including LGBTQ families, gender expansive children, and bullying and bias.

With Your Child's School

- **Determine your and your child's level of comfort in your family being out** as your children enters school. School personnel cannot be supportive of family situations if they don't know about them.
- **Provide the school with LGBTQ inclusive school resources such as books and lesson plans.** A school may not have previously addressed family diversity, but that doesn't mean it won't, if asked.
- **Find and review your school's anti-bullying policies.** Do they name the groups that are frequent targets of harassment including actual or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation? Naming it helps to stop it.
- **Talk with the principal about ways to support diverse families.** Are there visual signs that the school welcomes all children and their families? Are school forms family friendly for diverse families?
- **Ask the principal about professional development.** Has the staff had [training](#) on supporting students from [diverse families](#) including LGBTQ families? Have they had trainings on preventing gender or [bias-based bullying](#)?
- **Discuss a more inclusive approach to Mother's and Father's Day** -- if your school celebrates these holidays. Broaden the holidays to be inclusive of all kinds of family structures and honor all of the important and caring adults in children's lives.

With Your Child's School Community

- **Be prepared to come out** again and again to teachers, to students, to administrators, to parents and caregivers. Children may ask questions about your family out of curiosity. Administrators or other parents and caregivers may make assumptions that your family is heterosexual.
- **Get involved.** One of the best ways to become accepted in a school community is to get involved. Let people get to know you and your child as individuals.
- **Find support in community!** Work with other parents, guardians and educators to help develop a more welcoming school.
- **Organize an event** that will help your school community understand the diversity of families in students' lives.
- **Celebrate love and all kinds of families** by helping to [create hallway displays](#) with photos or children's artwork.