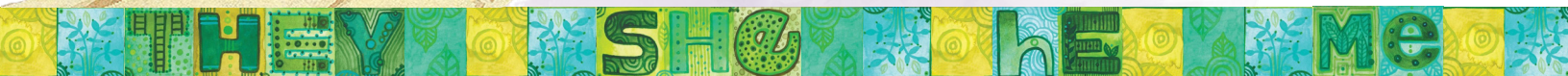


JAZZ & FRIENDS

Community Readings Organizing Kit



A LETTER FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS



As the director of the [Welcoming Schools](#) program at the Human Rights Campaign, I hear from teachers, principals and families of transgender youth almost daily. These caring adults often ask the same question:

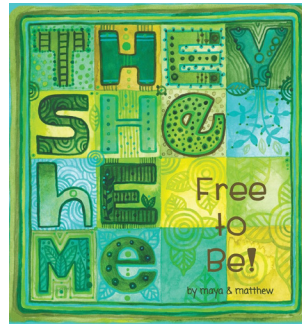
“How can I support transgender and non-binary youth?”

This question is vital, as the odds are stacked against transgender youth.

According to a recent [HRC Foundation report](#) based on 5,600 transgender and gender-expansive youth, less than a quarter of transgender and gender-expansive youth feel like they can definitely be themselves at school or at home.

However, when gender-expansive youth feel affirmed, their risk of depression, anxiety and other negative mental health outcomes is [greatly reduced](#).

Across the country this February 28, 2019, educators, parents and community advocates just like you will come together in classrooms, public libraries, places of worship and living rooms to read *I Am Jazz*, a book co-authored by transgender teen and former HRC Youth Ambassador Jazz Jennings.



This year, we are excited to introduce two new books: *Julián Is a Mermaid* and *They She He Me: Free to Be!* Books can act as both mirrors and windows for children to see representations of themselves, as well as to see another outlook on the world. When students read books in which they see characters like themselves who are valued in the world, they feel a sense of belonging. When students have the opportunity to learn about diverse backgrounds, languages, abilities and perspectives, they develop an understanding about the wider world.

The Welcoming Schools Organizing Kit provides everything you need to host a successful event. The Welcoming Schools program offers additional [gender resources](#) and [professional development](#) to schools nationwide. Visit [welcomingschools.org](#) to learn more! Together we can build more affirming and supportive spaces for transgender and non-binary youth across the country.

Best,

Johanna Eager

Director, Welcoming Schools

WHY JAZZ & FRIENDS READINGS?

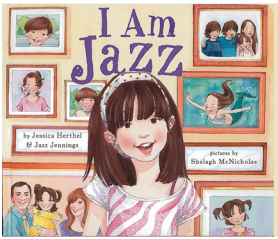
After a national anti-LGBTQ hate group bullied a young transgender girl in rural Wisconsin, [her community rallied for her](#) by hosting a community reading of *I Am Jazz*, a book co-written by transgender trailblazer and former HRC Youth Ambassador Jazz Jennings about her experience as a transgender girl.

Mount Horeb's unwavering support of transgender youth spurred an annual international movement commemorating the community's allyship and the resilience of transgender youth.

Now, you and your community can let transgender and non-binary youth in your community know that they are welcome and affirmed—just by reading!



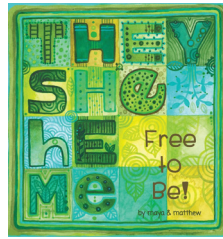
ABOUT THE BOOKS



I am Jazz

by Jessica Herthel & Jazz Jennings

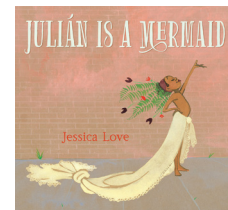
From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she was a girl even though she was assigned male at birth. It took a little while for her family and community to understand that Jazz was a girl. This book is based on her real life experiences when she was young. Jazz is a former HRC Foundation Youth Ambassador, stars in her own reality show and has written a book for teens, *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen*.



They She He Me: Free to Be!

by Maya & Matthew Smith-Gonzalez

They She He Me: Free to Be! shows many different children with a wide variety of gender expressions under each pronoun and invites readers to break down assumptions of what it can mean to be “she” or “he” and expand beyond the binary to include “they” and more. Also included is some discussion for grown-ups on how to hold a supportive space for kids (and for themselves).



Julián Is a Mermaid

by Jessica Love

While in the subway with his Abuela, Julián sees three people spectacularly dressed up as mermaids and wants to dress up just like them. But what will his Abuela think? A story about the power of being seen and affirmed.

ORGANIZING A JAZZ & FRIENDS READING



STEP 1: DECIDE WHICH TYPE OF READING TO HOST

Here are some ideas:

Community reading. In the spirit of the original Mt. Horeb reading, organize a reading in a library, place of worship, bookstore or other public space to illustrate the support of your community.

Private reading. Some people prefer to keep their events small and invite close friends into their living room or gather coworkers in a conference room for a lunchtime read aloud of one of the Jazz & Friends books.

In your school or classroom. If you're an elementary school teacher, consider choosing one of the three Jazz & Friends books to read to your class, just like you would with any other children's book. For more resources on holding a reading in your school, download Welcoming Schools lesson plans aligned with national standards for [I Am Jazz](#), [Julián Is a Mermaid](#) and [They She He Me: Free to Be!](#)

STEP 2: FIND A VENUE FOR YOUR JAZZ & FRIENDS EVENT

If you're hosting a reading open to the public, you'll need a place to gather. Consider these options:

- + Libraries
- + Community Centers
- + LGBTQ Centers
- + Bookstores
- + Places of Worship (churches, mosques and temples)
- + Children's Museums

In selecting a venue, consider the following:

- + What spaces are available free of cost?
- + Who in the community may want to donate a space?
- + What spaces are accessible to people with different abilities and identities?



STEP 3: DECIDE WHO WILL BE READING

Is there a teacher, school official, family member or community member who would be willing to read the book or help facilitate the discussion? Do you want to read the book? Are there advocates or other experts in your community who might be willing to lend their expertise?

Avoid assuming that the LGBTQ people you know will be interested in leading the event. Just because a librarian is gay or a parent in the school community is transgender does not always mean that they are the best fit for reading the book. You know your community best and can use your best judgment in finalizing the event's leadership.

At some events, people choose to show a [video of Jazz reading her book](#), specially developed for the Jazz and Friends National Day of School & Community Readings (with either Spanish or English captions).



STEP 4: PARTNER WITH LOCAL LEADERS & ORGANIZATIONS

Consider partnering with LGBTQ centers, politicians, places of worship and other supportive community organizations. Partners can help you publicize the event and may have the ability to provide financial support for food and beverages or copies of *I Am Jazz*, *Julián is a Mermaid* and *They She He Me: Free to Be!* to share with participants.

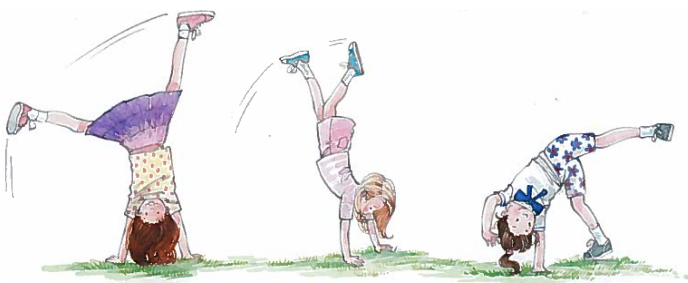


STEP 5: DIFFERENT WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

- + Publicize on social media.
- + Make an event page on Facebook to encourage people to RSVP.
- + Invite local leaders (e.g. elected officials, school board members, supportive community members, local leaders of LGBTQ organizations, etc.) and ask them to help promote your event.
- + Distribute [fliers](#) at your local library, put them on bulletin boards in supportive locations and bring them to a local community or LGBTQ center.
- + Share information about your event on a listserv. Are you part of a listserv for parents, a listserv for your congregation, school, or community list?
- + Submit to your local community calendar. Most outlets allow you to do this via a website.
- + Send out information a week or two prior to the event, a few days before, the day before and the day of the event to remind people to attend.
- + Download our [press release template](#) to invite reporters from your local newspapers, television stations and radio stations to attend and report on your event, or add to event listings they may host on their websites or in their publications.
- + If you would like HRC to publicize your event to our members and supporters in your area send the link to your event to us at WelcomingSchools@hrc.org

Sample language for social sharing:

Using social media tools like Facebook and Twitter can boost attendance at your event. Remember to post about your event more than once and link it to your Facebook event (if you have one).



FACEBOOK

Support transgender and non-binary youth by joining me for the Jazz and Friends National Day of School & Community Readings on February 28 at [LOCATION]. [EVENT LINK]

Join me and the Human Rights Campaign on February 28 for the Jazz and Friends National Day of School & Community Readings. Let's come together to show our support for trans and non-binary youth. [EVENT LINK]

Don't forget to join your community on February 28 to read in support of transgender and non-binary youth with the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools! [EVENT LINK]

Don't forget to support transgender and non-binary youth on February 28! [EVENT LINK]

TWITTER

Support transgender and non-binary youth by joining me for @HRC's #JazzAndFriends National Day of School & Community Readings on February 28 at [LOCATION].

📖 📖 📖 [EVENT LINK]

Join me and @HRC on February 28 for the #JazzAndFriends National Day of School & Community Readings. Let's come together to show our support for trans and non-binary youth. [EVENT LINK]

SAVE THE DATE: On February 28, join me and @HRC to support trans and non-binary youth by reading in our community. #JazzAndFriends

📖 📖 📖 [EVENT LINK]

📖 Don't forget to join your community on February 28 to read in support of transgender and non-binary youth with @HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools! #JazzAndFriends [EVENT LINK]

Here's how you can support transgender and non-binary youth on February 28! #JazzAndFriends [EVENT LINK]

It's not too late! Join me and @HRC for a community event in support of trans and non-binary youth TONIGHT! #JazzAndFriends [EVENT LINK]

Making final preparations for the reading:

- + Remind attendees about the event in the days leading up to the reading.
- + Contact the venue to confirm the reading location.
- + Ask a friend to take pictures of the event.
- + Confirm that any refreshments or other in-kind items will be at the event.

Plan for the event’s flow:

- + Develop a time and content outline.
- + Ask friends to help greet guests.
- + Decide who will introduce the reader.
- + Decide who will lead a discussion using the questions provided at the end of this Organizing Kit.
- + Invite local school board members, LGBTQ allies, faith-based leaders, local politicians and/or other important community leaders.

Welcoming Schools | **HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN** | **nea**

JAZZ & FRIENDS

National Day of School and Community Readings in Support of Transgender and Non-Binary Youth

Join HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools and the National Education Association (NEA) to show your support for transgender and non-binary youth by attending a Jazz & Friends reading.

WHO: Educators, families, allies, community members—all are welcome!

WHAT: Jazz & Friends readings bring together thousands of people in schools and communities in support of transgender and non-binary youth.

WHERE: [LOCATION]

WHEN: Thursday, February 28, 2019 at [TIME]

[INSERT SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR EVENT: e.g. special guest, refreshments provided, children welcome, etc.]

Questions? Contact [CONTACT INFO]

HRC.im/JazzAndFriends

For guidance and technical assistance, email melba.mathurin@hrc.org



TIPS FOR HOSTING A JAZZ & FRIENDS COMMUNITY EVENT

Creating welcoming and affirming spaces for transgender and non-binary youth can begin with intentional community gatherings to foster understanding through the reading of inclusive children's literature such as *I Am Jazz*, *Julián Is a Mermaid* or *They She He Me: Free to Be!* Jazz & Friends gatherings may happen in venues such as libraries, schools, children's museums or neighborhood centers. What is important is to make sure the conversations these readings generate are affirming and respectful.

Many people may be early in their journey toward understanding what it can mean to be transgender or non-binary and how to show ally behavior. You may be concerned that people will ask questions that are inappropriate or that you will simply be unsure of how to answer. It is not uncommon to feel this way, even for people who present about these topics regularly. The important thing is for people to gather together to show support for transgender and non-binary youth because we can all benefit from the positivity of these readings and the opportunities they can provide for further learning. We are enclosing many helpful tips in this handout to ensure a positive experience for all in attendance at your Jazz & Friends event.

- ✦ Consider who will read the book. The person who reads the book can be different than who organizes the event and leads a discussion. The reader could be a public official, a religious leader, an educator, a librarian, a community member, a student or a family member. Think about who might help draw a friendly crowd.
- ✦ Think about providing name tags so people can share their name and pronouns (if they use pronouns, because some people don't). The book and lesson [They She He Me: Free To Be!](#) have a wonderful guide on how to talk respectfully about pronouns and gender expression.
- ✦ When you begin to read the book, make sure to introduce yourself and say what pronouns you use.
- ✦ Remember that you cannot know how someone identifies based on how they look (their gender expression). So be mindful at your event to model respectfully asking people their name and pronouns (if any) that they want to be called if you are uncertain of how to address them.
- ✦ If the location where you are hosting the event does not already have all-gender restrooms, think about asking them if you could put up all-gender restroom signs during your event so that people of all genders can have access to facilities.
- ✦ Learn basic vocabulary before hosting your event. We have a helpful resource that has ways to define [LGBTQ Words for Children](#) in an age-appropriate way.
- ✦ Know that gender identity, who you love or are attracted to (sexual orientation) and pronouns assigned at birth (sex assigned at birth) are different. We have a helpful lesson plan, [The Gender Snowperson](#), that highlights important terminology about the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity that you will want to understand before hosting.
- ✦ If someone asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it is perfectly OK to say that you don't know.
- ✦ Transgender and non-binary bodies are private! It is not appropriate for someone to ask questions about surgeries, etc. at a community book reading for youth. We know Jazz Jennings has been very public about her gender-affirming surgeries on her television show, and that is a personal and intentional decision Jazz and her family made that works for them. However, these community readings are intended for young audiences, highlighting her children's book about her elementary school experiences. So if people ask about this, say, "Transgender and non-binary bodies are private, and we are not going to be discussing that here".
- ✦ Think about inviting local LGBTQ supporting organizations to table at your event.

I AM JAZZ

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GUIDE



BEFORE THE READING

Read the book yourself and think about what questions people may have. Think about how you might respond. Being prepared will help you be more comfortable during a reading.

The book simplifies the idea of being transgender to “a girl brain but a boy body;” however, being transgender is far more complex and is about more than just the brain. If someone identifies as a girl, then their body is a girl’s body. Our bodies do not determine our gender identity, which is who you know you know yourself to be in your heart and mind.

Transgender: when your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy/intersex, she/he pronouns or sex assigned at birth).

Note: If you don’t have a copy of the book, you can [watch Jazz Jennings read *I Am Jazz*](#) with either English or Spanish subtitles.

INTRODUCING AND READING *I AM JAZZ*

I Am Jazz is a first-person account of a transgender girl, written by transgender activist Jazz Jennings and co-author Jessica Herthel. Jennings was one of the first transgender children to talk publicly about her identity. At the age of 6, she spoke with Barbara Walters on *20/20*. She now has a popular reality TV show on TLC. Herthel is not transgender, nor does she have any transgender children. She co-wrote the book based on her desire to explain to her daughters what being transgender can mean, hoping to create a book that other parents and caring adults would use to start important conversations about gender with their kids.

Want a more in-depth learning opportunity? Welcoming Schools also has a lesson plan available for download at WelcomingSchools.org

DISCUSSIONS WITH TEENS AND ADULTS

- + Are there ways you can relate to Jazz’s story?
- + What are some ways parents and educators can help children understand gender identity and expression?
- + How can we teach children to care for and welcome people who are different from them?
- + What are some important steps we can take to support transgender and non-binary youth?
 - » Answers might include:
 - » Use correct name and pronouns (do not ask someone what name they used to use, their “real” name).
 - » Protect privacy—do not out someone because that can put them in danger. If someone shares their gender identity with you, it means they trust you—check in with them about what you can or cannot share.
 - » Advocate for full community access such as all-gender restrooms and locker rooms in public spaces.
 - » Remember that transgender and non-binary bodies are private—no, it isn’t OK to ask about surgeries, etc. unless you are someone’s intimate partner or medical provider.
- + Are there actions that you would like to take in your community to help transgender and non-binary youth feel welcomed and affirmed? In your schools? In your religious community? In your workplace? What might those steps be?

DISCUSSIONS WITH CHILDREN

- + What are some things you have in common with Jazz? What are some things that are different?
- + How does Jazz feel when other kids at school make fun of her because she’s transgender? How does it make you feel when someone teases or bullies you?
- + If Jazz went to your school, what could you do to help her feel safe and welcomed?

JULIÁN IS A MERMAID

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GUIDE



There are lots of different ways to be a boy, girl, both or neither. In this book, the pronouns he/his are used for Julián. However, the author, [Jessica Love](#), says that she “deliberately [doesn’t] specify in the book how exactly Julián identifies...[she wants] the book to function as a door swinging open...allowing different children to read their own story in Julián’s.”

Julián Is a Mermaid provides a role model of a grandmother who loves and affirms her grandson and his exploration of his interests. A recent [HRC study](#) found that only about half of transgender, non-binary or gender-expansive youth are out to some or all of their parents and siblings, while only a third are out to extended family. These percentages held true for all youth in the study, including [Latinx youth](#) like Julián. LGBTQ youth whose families are [affirming](#) have a lowered risk of depression and feelings of hopelessness, greater self-esteem and resilience and a reduced risk of substance use.

Near the end of the book, Abuela brings Julián to a mermaid parade. This parade is based on the [Coney Island Mermaid Parade](#), an annual event that has been going on for almost 40 years in New York City.

INTRODUCING AND READING

JULIÁN IS A MERMAID

It is important not to make assumptions about how Julián identifies because we do not know. This is an important teachable moment for community members because we cannot know how someone identifies (transgender, non-binary, cisgender, etc.) unless they or the author specifically share that with us. We do know that we can encourage people to be respectful and open to all the ways young

people may express their genders and pursue their interests with or without labels.

Share the title and author of the book: *Julián Is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love. As there is not a lot of text in the book, take time as you read for people to look at the illustrations. Ask people to notice the expressions on the characters’ faces.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- + How does Julián feel when he is a mermaid? If you could dress any way you wanted, what would you wear? Who or what would you want to be?
- + At first it seems like Abuela is angry with Julián for dressing as a mermaid. How does that seem to make Julián feel? How would it make you feel? Abuela’s anger is short-lived. How does Abuela demonstrate that she is affirming of Julián?
- + How do you feel when you can express yourself without wondering what others will say or think?
- + Do you think Julián would be teased by other children for being a mermaid if he went to your school or lived in your neighborhood? If you saw that happening, what could you do to be a kind friend? What could you do as an adult?

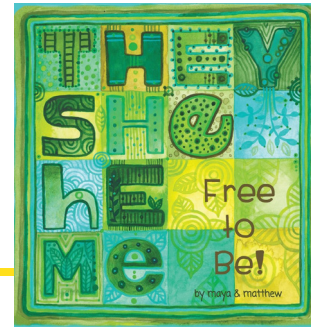
PRONUNCIATION / TRANSLATIONS

- + Julián (who-lee-ahn)
- + Abuela (ah-bwel-ah) *Grandmother.*
- + Vámanos (ba-mah-nos) *Let’s go.*
- + Mijo (me-ho) *Affectionate term for a younger boy. A contraction of the words “mi” and “hijo”—literally “my son”.*
- + Latinx (La-teen-ex) *A gender inclusive term for someone of Latin American descent.*

Want a more in-depth learning opportunity?
Welcoming Schools also has a lesson plan
available for download at [WelcomingSchools.org](#)

THEY SHE HE ME: FREE TO BE!

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GUIDE



Talking about pronouns serves as a familiar starting point for kids and adults to expand their ideas about gender. The book *They She He Me: Free To Be!* by Maya and Matthew Smith-Gonzalez provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss pronouns and gender expression. One of the learning objectives of this book is to teach children to accept and embrace the many ways people may choose to express who they are through clothing and hairstyles (gender expression), free of gender norms.

BEFORE A COMMUNITY READING OF *THEY SHE HE ME: FREE TO BE!*

- + Read the book yourself before your event so you can think about questions you and community members may have. Practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you be comfortable with a topic you may be unfamiliar discussing.
- + Review the notes “For the Grown-Ups” in the back of *They She He Me: Free To Be!*
- + Review [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to prepare to define words for people.
- + If a community member asks you a question and you’re unsure of the answer, it’s OK to say that you don’t know or that there are likely multiple answers to the question depending on who you ask!
- + You may want to reference the [Gender Snowperson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of how you feel (gender identity), who you love (sexual orientation), pronoun assigned at birth (sex assigned at birth) and gender expression. Many people do not realize that gender identity and sexual orientation are two very different concepts and that all of us have both a gender identity and sexual orientation.
- + Notice that the words “girl” and “boy” are not used in the book. This is intentional. By providing other ways to think about and navigate the world beyond assuming someone’s pronouns, the text naturally helps to redirect readers away from assumptions and stereotypes.

READ AND DISCUSS THE BOOK

- + Share your name and pronouns (if you use pronouns) with community members .
- + Look at the illustrations throughout the book with community members.
- + Have people notice which children from the “ME” pages show up with other pronouns on the other pages. Find the children who don’t claim more pronouns than me. Ask people to find the child who identifies as both he and she. (This child is wearing a head wrap with a top knot.)

Note: Calling someone a “he/she” is transphobic and is also different than the person in this book who uses more than one pronoun. It is important to understand this difference.

Read the page that says “Pronouns.”

- + Ask people if someone’s gender expression (how you wear your hair or how you express the spirit of who you are, even what colors you like) determines their pronouns. Is there one way to express your gender if your pronouns are she? Is there one way to be if your pronouns are he? Can we know someone’s pronouns by how they look or do we need to politely ask?

Read the page that says “Freeing Pronouns.”

- + Ask people if you can know how someone feels on the inside based on how they look on the outside. Let people know that some people use more than one pronoun. Some people choose not to use pronouns at all; they might use their name instead.
- + Can we know someone’s pronouns by how they look (gender expression)? If you are unsure of what pronouns someone uses, you could ask politely, “My pronouns are she/her/hers; what, if any, are your pronouns?” Using the right pronouns is one way to show someone they are seen.

Read the page that says “Claiming Pronouns.”

- + Ask people what the author means by, “You can have an outside pronoun and an inside pronoun.” Help them understand that how we feel inside can sometimes be hard to share because we might be afraid of the way other people will treat us. All of us have places where we show different parts of ourselves, and the more respectful and kind we are to each other, the more of ourselves we will all feel safe to share in our community.

**Read the page that says “Creating Pronouns.”**

- + People are adding and creating new pronouns every day which are shaping and re-shaping our vocabulary.

Read the page that says “Using Pronouns.”

- + Have people practice using they/them pronouns. Example: “Where is Lenny?” “They went to the library” or “They went to get a drink of water.”

Read the page that says “Playing with Pronouns.”

- + Remind people that it is not OK to change someone else’s pronoun—that is teasing or bullying, not play. Be respectful and practice asking and using the pronouns people want to be called (if they use pronouns).

**Read the page About M+M (optional)**

- + If needed, refer to [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to define the terms “queer” and “LGBTQ” for community members.

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available for download at WelcomingSchools.org