



Reading LGBTQ- Inclusive Children's Books in Schools

BEFORE READING A BOOK TO YOUR CLASS

- First, think about whether or not reading the book is the place to start in developing a welcoming school or do 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 LGBTQ topics or gender roles.
- Prepare yourself to answer students' questions. Check out [*Responding to Questions About LGBTQ Topics: An Interactive Skill-Building Exercise*](#).
- Discuss families with LGBTQ parents in the context of the range of family diversity that exists in our schools and communities.
- Look at how reading the book fits into your curriculum such as social studies units on family, units on understanding and respecting others, and 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 or developing student self-esteem.
- Attend or hold a professional development workshop in your school on LGBTQ topics or gender in elementary school.
- If there are students with LGBTQ parents/guardians in your class or in your school, find out the language that they use to refer to their families to help answer other student's 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, check out some of the other materials from *Welcoming Schools* such as [*Gender and Children: A Place to Begin*](#), [*Affirming Gender in Elementary Schools*](#), or the bibliography, [*Gender Identity and Children: Books to Help Adults Understand*](#).
- If there is only one student with LGBTQ parents/guardians in your school or one student who presents in non-stereotypical ways around gender, be careful not to continually single them out as an example.



LGBTQ 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 families are unique while at the same time they share many common values, beliefs and traditions.

The LGBTQ 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 and they do not highlight having lesbian or gay parents as an issue or a problem for the children.

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

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 LGBTQ people outside of school.

If teasing of a student with LGBTQ parents/guardians has already been an issue, one of the more recent younger 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 the Welcoming Schools 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.