

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

*Six to twelve year olds talk about gays and lesbians*



## FACILITATION GUIDE





## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS FACILITATION GUIDE:

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### Workshops and Events with *What Do You Know?*

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- What Does Gay Mean?
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To see *What Do You Know?* streaming online go to:  
[www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow](http://www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow)





# Welcoming Schools

*What Do You Know? Six to Twelve Year-olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians*



## ABOUT THE FILM

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*What Do You Know?* is an award-winning, 13-minute film produced by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools Project. It features students from Alabama and Massachusetts discussing what they hear about LGBTQ topics at school, and how they'd like teachers to address hurtful name-calling and harassment.

The students in this film range in ages from 6 to 12, come from rural, urban and suburban settings, represent a variety of economic backgrounds and family situations, and all but one attend public school. Of the 25 children featured, 19 are being raised by moms and dads, three have lesbian or gay parents, three are being raised by single moms, two are adopted and six have parents who were not born in the United States.

## WHY THIS FILM?

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Some educators and administrators are comfortable answering questions about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) people; others aren't quite sure what to say. Some are comfortable stopping anti-LGBTQ or gender-related harassment and then using it as a teachable moment to talk about why it is wrong and hurtful; others may only say, "Stop it," but then do not know what else to say to a student or classroom. Some educators may try to ignore this behavior completely.

Even if your school seems LGBTQ-friendly, there are always educators who feel nervous or uncertain about discussing LGBTQ topics with students, whether they are answering questions from students or responding to anti-LGBTQ put-downs.

Many educators, administrators and parents seek resources and training to help create a safe and secure learning environment for all their students. HRC's Welcoming Schools and the film, *What Do You Know?*, are good places to start.





# Welcoming Schools

## Ways to Use *What Do You Know?* in Your School or Community

### **For All Audiences:**

- Show that students want educators to stop LGBTQ and gender putdowns at school and that they want their school to welcome all students and their families.
- Show that children are already having conversations regarding LGBTQ topics.
- Model ways students are able to talk about these topics.
- Help viewers develop tools to respond to questions and comments from students.

### **For Elementary School Educators, Counselors and, Administrators:**

- Use as a starting point for professional development on ways to stop LGBTQ harassment and bullying, hurtful name-calling and practice answering students' questions on LGBTQ topics including families with LGBTQ parents.
- Supplement existing anti-bullying programs such as Second Step, Olweus and Responsive Classroom.

### **For an Evening Event for Parents and Guardians at Your School or in Your Community:**

- Bring your community together to discuss how educators and families can work together to stop harassment, bullying and LGBTQ gay putdowns.
- Help parents and guardians develop language to talk about LGBTQ topics with their kids.
- Create a springboard for discussing ways to talk with their own children when they come home with questions about LGBTQ topics.

### **For Undergraduate or Graduate Level Courses in Elementary Education, School Counseling, School Psychology or Social Work:**

- Use as a starting place to help your students become more confident in talking about LGBTQ topics in elementary schools.
- Help your students be prepared to intervene when they hear gender and LGBTQ putdowns.

### **For Workshops at Conferences for Educators, Counselors, Social Workers or School Psychologists:**

- Show clips of the film as a warm-up to role-plays on responding to students' questions on LGBTQ topics and stopping hurtful LGBTQ comments.
- Discuss steps people can take in their schools or districts to create more welcoming elementary schools.

### **For Religious Educators**

- Help religious school teachers and parents engage in critical conversations to ensure that LGBTQ terms are used without intentional or unintentional harm.

### **For High School or Middle School Anti-Bullying Groups, Diversity Groups or GSAs**

- Prompt discussion with students about their own experiences of mean teasing and bullying during their elementary school years and now!
- Show older students that if young kids can tell someone to stop saying, "That's gay!" maybe they can too!





# Welcoming Schools

## Professional Development Workshop with *What Do You Know?*

Showing this film as part of a training helps educators understand the need for addressing LGBTQ put-downs and family diversity in elementary school. The film shows that students know more than we give them credit for and that they are already having these conversations regardless of whether adults participate. Students need and ask for adults to mediate these conversations for their physical and emotional safety so they can focus on learning.

### Materials Needed

*What Do You Know?* DVD or stream online at [www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow](http://www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow); TV or screen; computer or DVD player; LCD projector, copies of handouts such as *What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay' & Other Anti-LGBTQ Comments?*, *What Does Gay Mean?* or *Defining LGBTQ Terms for Elementary School Students* (see appendices.)

### Pre-screening Icebreaker: Stand up/Sit down (5 minutes)

This is an opportunity to get a sense of who is in the room and what some of their experiences have been. Read the questions and ask participants to either stand up or raise their hands if the answer to the question is “yes.”

- Have you taught a child who was called names because other students thought that they did not act enough like a boy or like a girl?
- Have you taught a child who has two mothers or two fathers?
- Do you think that most students you work with have heard the word “gay” or other LGBTQ terms? Do they know what they mean?
- Have you heard students use LGBTQ words in a negative way? (Using phrases such as “that’s gay” or “are you a homo or something?”)
- Have you taught or worked with a gender-expansive or transgender child?
- Have you helped a student who was excluded or put down because of some aspect of their identity? Ask for volunteers to share a few examples of what they did and what was effective.

### Introduce the Film

- We all hear messages about LGBTQ topics from many sources, but we’re not always sure what kids have heard and what kinds of conversations they are having. This film was produced by *Welcoming Schools* to let us hear directly from students about what they hear at school, and what they’d like teachers and adults to do.
- The film features 6 – 12 year-olds from Alabama and Massachusetts. All, but one, of them attend public schools.
- The conversations reflected in the film were not rehearsed, but reflect the kids own thoughts, feelings and experiences.
- To give some more background on the children, you could say:
  - Nineteen are being raised by moms and dads.
  - Six are being raised in families with step-moms and step-dads due to divorce.
  - Three have lesbian or gay parents.
  - Three are being raised by single moms.
  - Two are adopted.
  - Six have parents who were born outside of the U.S.



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## Some Things to Think About While Watching the Film

- Take note of what surprises you or stands out for you.
- Do you see any implications for your own work with students?
- What can we learn from these children?

I wish more teachers could elaborate on it [LGBTQ topics] and talk about it more, instead of like, two sentences and then dismiss the subject.

## Show the Film

### Post-Screening Discussion Prompts

Depending on the size of the group and time available, you could use some of the following prompts to create a discussion among the entire group, or in smaller clusters that break out and then report back.

- What surprised you or stood out to you from this film?
- In the film, several children mentioned they had heard the word “gay” by kindergarten and several students mentioned that they have only heard LGBTQ words in negative contexts in school. What have you heard in your school?
- Several students describe how they act as “allies” by asking other students not to say “that’s so gay.” In what ways can we as adults model and encourage and support ally behavior?
- In the film, one student says, “My teacher talked about how we should not say ‘that’s so gay’ because it could hurt someone’s feelings.” Could you imagine having that kind of conversation with your students? How do you think they would react? What concerns would you have? In what contexts, might you expand the conversation beyond “That could hurt someone’s feelings?” What else might you say and why?
- One girl says, “My brother was five and six in kindergarten and first grade and he would get teased for being gay because he was a little bit more feminine. I really wish they would have stopped it.” Discuss ways you have and/or could address gender-related teasing and bullying.
- Are there themes in what the students said that make you think about how to address LGBTQ or gender-related topics in your school or classroom?
- How would you summarize the messages that you heard from the students?

My Kindergarten teacher explained what gay and lesbian were after this kid had been teased about his moms – him having two moms.

He just laid down a few things. It was like, “No teasing about who your parents love. Love is love, and you shouldn’t turn love into hate.”

## Closing

To help participants focus on next steps in creating more welcoming schools or communities, end with these questions. You may want to record responses on a piece of easel paper so the group has a record of its likely action steps.

- Did a student say something in the film that encourages you to want to change something you do in the classroom, or to want to change something your school does as an institution?
- What are next steps that will help your school or community move forward?

## Follow-up Professional Development Activity

*Responding to Questions About LGBT Topics: An Interactive Skill-Building Exercise* is an excellent professional development activity that gives participants the chance to practice talking about LGBTQ topics with students, colleagues and parents or families. This activity can take 30 – 60 minutes depending upon the number of question and response role-plays you include. Practicing responses will help educators feel more confident in their classroom and school. (See appendix for this activity.)



# Welcoming Schools

## School-Based Community Building Event with *What Do You Know?*

### Goals

- To bring parents and caregivers in your school community together.
- To help families and educators see the level of knowledge that students already have about LGBTQ topics.
- To help people feel more comfortable answering children's questions about gender and LGBTQ topics.
- To see that students want adults to intervene when children use LGBTQ put downs and hurtful behavior.

### Keys to a Successful Event:

- The more people you work with to organize the event, 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 by sharing in your school newsletter, website, or notes home with students.
- If students have created artwork around themes of diversity and welcoming schools, consider having the artwork present at the event. This helps increase attendance, as people like to see their children's projects on display.
- Provide childcare to allow more people to attend.
- Serve food!

### Materials Needed

*What Do You Know?* DVD or stream online at [www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow](http://www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow); computer or DVD player; large screen; LCD projector; copies of handouts such as *What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay?'* & *Other Anti-LGBTQ Comments*, *What Does Gay Mean?* or *Defining LGBTQ Terms for Elementary School Students* (see appendices); food and beverages.

### Planning for a Screening Event

- Form a committee of parents/caregivers and staff to plan the event. It is helpful to have the evening sponsored by an established group within your school – the PTO/PTA, a Site-Based Council, Anti-Bullying Committee, Diversity Committee, etc.
- Work with the administrators in your school. Show them the trailer or the complete 13-minute film. Work with them to begin or augment plans for making your school more welcoming.
- Select a date and reserve your space. Ensure that the space has the equipment needed to show the film and that someone knows how to use it.
- Publicize the event with flyers, emails and announcements in any newsletters or other communications with parents and caregivers. This is key to a successful event.
- Ask someone from your committee or your school to be the moderator. This could be the school principal, a teacher, a school counselor or a parent or caregiver with experience leading group discussions. Good group leaders and speakers help the event go smoothly.



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## Night of the Screening

Let people know who was involved in organizing the evening and why you wanted to hold this event at your school. Talk briefly about why developing a welcoming school is important to you and to the students in your school.

### Pre-screening Icebreaker: Stand up/Sit down

Introduce this activity as an opportunity to get a sense of who is in the room and what some of their experiences have been in relation to the topics covered in the film.

Ask participants to either stand up or raise their hands if the answer to the question is “yes.”

These are examples of questions that you could use or you could develop your own based on your school and the audience you will be expecting.

- Have you seen children excluded or put down because of some aspect of their identity, or because of the composition of their family? Ask for some examples.
- Has your child or another child you know been called names because other students thought that they did not act enough like a boy or like a girl?
- Does your child have a friend or classmate who has two mothers or two fathers?
- Do you or your child know a gender-expansive or transgender child?
- Do you think that your child and their peers have heard the words “gay” or other LGBTQ terms? Do you think they know what they mean?
- Have you heard your child or other children use LGBTQ words in a negative way? (Using phrases such as “that’s gay” or “are you a homo or something?”)

### Introducing the Film

Before screening the film, you may want to introduce this film with some of the following thoughts:

*We all hear messages about LGBTQ people from many sources, but we’re not always sure what kids have heard and what kinds of conversations they have today. This film was produced by the Human Rights Campaign’s Welcoming Schools project to let us hear directly from students about what they have heard around school and what questions they might have. It was initially designed as a tool for professional development training for educators. The students in the film come from Alabama and Massachusetts and all but one of them are from public schools. None of these students were coached on what to say. These are their stories.*

Let people know that there will be time for discussion after the film. Ask people to listen for stories that may be familiar based on their experiences or their children’s, as well as stories that are new to them.

### Post-Screening Discussion Prompts

- As you were watching the film, what stood out for you or was surprising?
- Did anything in this film raise concerns for your child or your child’s classroom?
- A number of children in the film mentioned they asked their mom what “gay” meant. Raise your hand if you have discussed these or similar questions with your child. What worked well in the discussion, and what do you wish you had done differently?
- We hear students in the film suggest strategies to make schools more safe and welcoming for children with LGBTQ parents and relatives. What ideas do you have to improve the school environment?
- Several students describe how they ask other students not to say “that’s gay.” How can we support children who are trying to interrupt other children’s negative behaviors?



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- Can you recall interrupting anti-gay or anti-LGBTQ comments or jokes yourself? Describe the experience. What was in place to support you?
  - How can you, as a member of the school community, support your school in being a safe and inclusive place for all kids to learn and grow?

### Role Play Activity

Break group into pairs, having each person take a turn playing the adult and the child. With everyone doing the same role-play you can then discuss possible ways to respond together as a group. Here are some sample questions from a child's perspective (ways to respond to questions like these can be found in the handouts in the appendices):

- What does "gay" mean? I heard someone called that today.
- I met someone with two moms. How could they have two moms?
- My teacher said it is wrong to say the word "gay?" Why can't I say it?
- I know a boy who wants to take ballet lessons. I thought ballet was for girls.
- Other kids keep calling my friend a sissy. It bothers me and I want them to stop. What can I do?

OK, so there's these two people. There's a boy and a boy or a girl and a girl. And they love each other, yeah.

That stuff lasts forever. It stays in their minds and it haunts them. So, I think that it should not be accepted and that it should be addressed immediately.

I was on the bus, and the way the kids had said it, it sounded like some big bad thing so I went home and asked my mom, "Is being gay bad?"

I was in the 4th grade and this guy came up and I did something wrong, not wrong, but did something kind of funny...He went "aw man you're gay". I'm like what does that mean?

Some families and educators are comfortable answering questions about LGBTQ people and intervening in cases of anti-LGBTQ teasing; others aren't quite sure what to say. This discussion guide is meant to be a starting place for conversations about LGBTQ topics in an elementary school environment. You may want to pick and choose from these conversation ideas and discussion questions depending on the kind of group you are facilitating and their level of previous knowledge and engagement with LGBTQ issues.

## About the Film

*What Do You Know?* is an award-winning 13-minute film produced by Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools project, and featuring students from Alabama and Massachusetts discussing what they hear about LGBTQ topics at school, and how they'd like teachers to address hurtful name-calling and harassment.

The kids in this film range in ages from 6 to 12, come from rural, urban, and suburban settings, and represent a variety of economic backgrounds, and family situations. Of the 25 children featured, 19 are being raised by moms and dads, three have lesbian or gay parents, three are being raised by single moms, two are adopted, and six have parents who were not born in the US.

Streaming online at: [www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow](http://www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow).

## Goals

- Help parents and caregivers understand how to create a welcoming school climate for all students and their families by encouraging respect for family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping, and ending hurtful name-calling, harassment, and bullying.
- Recognize that students are already having conversations about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) people, and brainstorm ideas for how parents can contribute to these conversations and address their children's questions.
- Provide a safe and respectful school community for LGBTQ students, parents, and their allies to come out.

## Discussion Ideas

### Ask Participants to Talk About...

- What parts of the film surprised them or stood out to them?
- Whether the film raised any concerns for their child or his or her school environment?
- How the film made them think about gender and how the school environment affects gender roles?
- Situations in which teachers or administrators should talk about LGBTQ people?



### Ask participants, "What Would You Do..."

- If your male child was being harassed by his peers for wearing pink?
- If you heard your child make an anti-gay comment?
- If your child's teacher said something negative about LGBTQ people?

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## Related Discussion Questions

### For Families:

- Do you feel uncomfortable or nervous talking about or speaking up for LGBTQ people?
- What steps is your child's school taking to discuss LGBTQ people?
- How can you talk to your kids about being supportive of LGBTQ students and students who have LGBTQ parents?
- What does a "welcoming" school environment look like? What roles do students, teachers, parents, and administrators play?

### For LGBT Parents or Parents and Families of Openly LGBT Kids:

- What have been your experiences with other parents in your children's school? What about with your children's teachers and school administration?
- Have you ever felt unwelcome or has your child ever mentioned being teased or bullied about your/their identity?
- Have you or your children ever heard classmates, teachers, or administrators talk about LGBTQ people? Negatively or positively?
- Have your children had assignments at school about family, and have they felt uncomfortable or excluded?

### Next Steps

- Ask attendees if they would be willing to host another showing of the film and facilitate a discussion with a different group of parents or families.
- Encourage attendees to contact teachers and school administrators and to talk with other parents about making your local schools more welcoming.
- Learn more about Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools project and find out what resources are available for families and educators at [welcomingschools.org](http://welcomingschools.org).

## About HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools

HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools is a comprehensive, LGBT- and gender-inclusive approach to creating respectful and supportive elementary schools for all students and their families, by addressing problems of anti-gay slurs and gender stereotyping. Welcoming Schools is a unique program in its inclusion of LGBTQ-headed families and stopping LGBTQ putdowns in the context of all kinds of family diversity and bias-based name-calling. The program's approach is grounded in research that links improved academic achievement and social-emotional well-being with an inclusive school climate.





## WHAT DOES GAY MEAN?

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### **There is not one right answer.**

Many adults 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 they 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 classroom 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 targeted 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.
- People can fall in love and want to be in a relationship with people of the same gender or with people of a different gender.

### **Sample responses to “What does gay mean?”**

- The word gay describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman, who love each other.
- It describes a boy who wants to have a boyfriend or a girl who wants to have a girlfriend.
- “Gay” can refer to either men or women but it is sometimes used just to refer to gay men. Women who are gay can also be called “lesbians.”





## DEFINING LGBTQ TERMS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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- When children ask questions about LGBTQ words, it is sometimes best to offer simple and direct answers.
- You might choose to answer a student's question with another question to figure out what they are really asking -- is it about name-calling, a classmate's two dads or something they saw on the internet. Listening first helps you respond.
- Using examples helps students understand definitions.
- Questions about LGBTQ words can provide teachable moments on topics like understanding difference and treating people with respect.
- If a student uses an LGBTQ term in a derogatory way, ask them if they know what it means. If they don't, give a short definition and explain how that term is hurtful and mean. Let them know they should not use it in that way.
- This list can serve as a starting place for educators to respond to questions about LGBTQ words. These suggested definitions can help to ensure that you feel confident in your own knowledge and ability to communicate these ideas to students.

### Definitions for Students

**LGBTQ:** An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.

**GAY:** A woman who loves a woman or a man who loves a man. Focus on love, relationships and family. This word is sometimes used just to refer to men. Women who are gay can also be called "lesbians."

**LESBIAN:** A woman who loves another woman or feels attracted to other women.

**TRANSGENDER:** When babies are first born, the doctor usually decides that they are either a boy or a girl. For transgender people, what the doctor decides based on their bodies at birth is different from the gender they know they are. Trans for short.

**BISEXUAL:** A person who is attracted to people of more than one gender.

**HETEROSEXUAL:** A person who is attracted to people of a different gender. In other words, a man who is attracted only to women, or a woman who is attracted only to men. Also known as "straight."

**HOMOSEXUAL:** Another word for "gay" or "lesbian." Usually used in medical or scientific references.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Everyone has a sexual orientation. A person's sexual orientation is based on what gender or genders someone is attracted to. .

**GENDER IDENTITY:** Everyone has a gender identity, which is based on what gender they feel like they are inside – male, female, both or neither.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** Putting down or thinking less of people because they are LGBT or because you think they are LGBT.

**DYKE:** A slang term for "lesbian." Some lesbians use the word in a positive way to describe themselves. It is also usually used as an insult.

**FAG OR FAGGOT:** A slang term for "gay." It is usually used as an insult.

**COMING OUT:** When someone tells other people that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Sometimes called "coming out of the closet."

# WHAT DO YOU SAY TO 'THAT'S SO GAY' & OTHER ANTI-LGBTQ\* COMMENTS?

It doesn't matter if it is a first grader who might not know what the word "gay" means, a sixth grader trying to sound cool, or a tenth grader "teasing" a friend. All of these scenarios have the potential of creating an unsafe classroom or school environment and must be addressed. **So, what can caring adults do?**

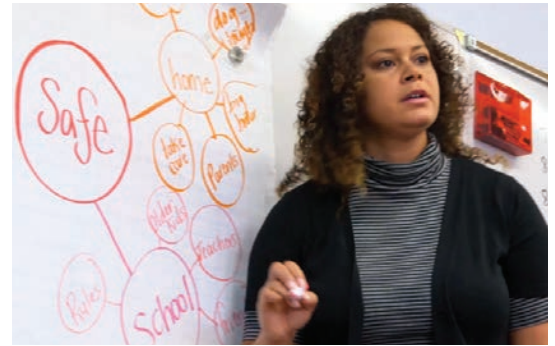
## STOP IT...

**Keep it simple with quick responses:**

- "Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class."
- "Do you know what 'gay' means?"
- "It's not OK at this school to use 'gay' disrespectfully to mean something is bad."
- "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." Follow-up with, "Do you know why it is hurtful?"
- "Using the word 'homo' to tease someone is harassment and is unacceptable."
- "Even if you didn't mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this assignment gay (or queer); if you don't like something, then say you don't like it!"
- "It is never OK to say, 'you act like a girl (or look like a boy)' as a put-down."
- "Using the words 'queer', 'dyke' or 'fag' to joke around is not OK. These are hurtful words and can impact anyone who overhears them."
- "It doesn't matter who said it, I don't want to hear that kind of language again. Is that clear?"

## DON'T IGNORE IT...

- Harassment does not go away on its own.
- Ignoring mean name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.
- If other students do not see action, they get the message there is nothing wrong with it.
- Not speaking up teaches the student targeted, as well as anyone within hearing range, that they will not be protected from harassment.
- 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 and harassment isn't always easy. With experience you will become more comfortable in handling it. Practice with colleagues.
- You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.



## WHY STOP ANTI-LGBTQ COMMENTS?

"Middle-school students called anti-gay names report increased anxiety, depression, personal distress and a lower sense of school belonging regardless of their sexual orientation."

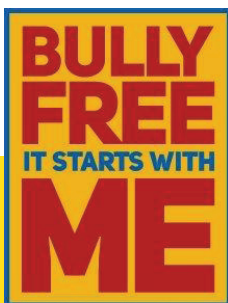
— V.P. Poteat and D.L. Espelage, 2007

"Both students who are targeted and students who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement in school."

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

"If name-calling or other discrimination happens at school and goes either unnoticed or is not discussed by adults, students infer that the behavior is widely accepted."

— F.E. Aboud, 2008



**\*LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning**



## EDUCATE...

- If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you don't, make time later.
- If you have been hearing the phrase "That's gay" or "no homo," take time during class to make sure that your students know what "gay" means and know why it is hurtful to use as a comment or put-down.
- Be clear that using the word "gay" in a negative way is disrespectful. Be clear that using the phrase "That's gay" is hurtful to other students who may have family members and friends who are LGBTQ.
- Be prepared to provide accurate information. For the youngest students, keep it simple — for example, "The word 'gay' describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman who love each other." As students get older, they may want more explanations and discussion.
- In lessons on respect, prejudice or civil rights, include information about discrimination against LGBTQ people and the LGBTQ civil rights movement.

A safe and welcoming school environment is essential for student success. **Educators are a critical component** in creating an environment that enables all students to thrive!"

— Lily Eskelsen García, President, National Education Association

## BE PROACTIVE...

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your school and classroom using inclusive language, books and other materials.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against hurtful teasing and bullying. Ensure that all members of the school community understand what the policies are and why they are important.
- Be explicit that rules against hurtful name-calling include "That's gay!" "Homo!" "Fag!" "Tranny!" "Sissy!" and other LGBTQ put-downs.
- Develop the capacity of students and educators to be allies that stand up for students who are harassed.



I wish more teachers could elaborate on it [LGBTQ topics] and talk about it more, instead of like, two sentences and then dismiss the subject."

— Elaina in *What Do You Know? Six-to Twelve-Year Olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians* (A Welcoming Schools Film)

## RESOURCES

### Welcoming Schools

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

K – 5 resources on gender, bullying & family inclusive of LGBTQ topics

### NEA Bully Free Campaign

[www.nea.org/bullyfree](http://www.nea.org/bullyfree)

Bullying prevention for educators

### Time to THRIVE

[www.timetothrive.org](http://www.timetothrive.org)

Annual conference for youth-serving professionals focused on LGBTQ youth

### PFLAG

[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

Parents and allies of LGBTQ youth

### The Trevor Project

[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

Suicide prevention

### GLSEN

[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Safe schools for LGBTQ youth

### Gender Spectrum

[www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)

Gender identity and expression for youth of all ages

### StopBullying.gov

Information and resources from various government agencies

**BULLY  
FREE**  
IT STARTS WITH  
**ME**

**nea** NATIONAL  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION [nea.org](http://nea.org)  
Great Public Schools for Every Student

**HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN  
FOUNDATION**





## BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS AND PUT-DOWNS ON GENDER

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

### **“Why does Martin like pink?”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- That's not OK at our school to call someone a “girl” to insult them or make them feel bad.



- Student: “But he is always playing with the girls and with girl toys!”
  - At this school all children can play and do things together. He’s a boy who likes to play with girls and that’s OK. All kinds of toys and games are for all children.

**“Why does she always play with the boys?”**

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

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

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

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

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

**Simple phrases students could say to each other.**

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

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

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

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

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

**Sample responses:**

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

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

*Ideas based on: The Gender Inclusive School by Gender Spectrum, Graciela Sleseransky-Poe, “Not True! Gender Doesn’t Limit You” by Lindsay Lamb, et al. Teaching Tolerance, and Johanna Eager*



# Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

## BIAS, BULLYING & BYSTANDERS

- Over three-quarters of middle school students who are harassed say that the **harassment is related to bias** about their race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, actual or perceived sexual orientation, religion or disability.<sup>1</sup>
- Students **targeted with anti-gay put-downs** are more likely to report higher levels of depression and anxiety and a **lower sense of school belonging, regardless of their sexual orientation**.
- Students in classrooms where teachers establish classroom norms that **explicitly value diversity are less likely to be teased** based on ethnicity and are more likely to value school, feel like they belong and get better grades.
- Student and adults who **perceive that others in their school would jump in to stop bullying** are **more likely to intervene** when they witness bullying.

## TIPS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS:

- **Be an upstander.** You are a role model for your students. They watch what you do and will follow your lead. They notice whether you stop hurtful name-calling or comments based on skin color, gender, religion, weight, ability and/or family structure and worry if they might be the next target of a mean remark.
- **Practice. Practice. Practice.** Improving your skills at anything takes practice — including stopping hurtful bullying and teasing. Practice with colleagues what you could say to students to stop harassment, to educate, and to let all students know that you expect respect and accept diversity.
- **Teach your students how to be an ally.** Work with your students so they know what they can do if they witness bullying — including talking with or befriending the targeted student, confiding in an adult, talking with the student who is being mean or speaking up in the moment.
- **Involve families.** Host a family night with a panel of diverse families from your school community. Hold a book night with students or teachers reading from books that show a range of diversity — including racial, ethnic, religious, economic status or family structure.
- **Use books to engage students.**
  - **Read books** featuring diverse families such as *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman or *The Family Book* by Todd Parr. Create hallway displays with students' drawings of their families or important adults/relatives in their lives.
  - **Read books** such as *One* by Kathryn Otoshi or *Benjamin and the Word / Benjamin y la palabra* by Daniel Olivas to spark discussion of hurtful teasing and ways to be an ally to classmates. Discuss with students the real put-downs they hear, paying close attention to ones that target a child's or their family's identity.

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

— Elementary School Principal

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

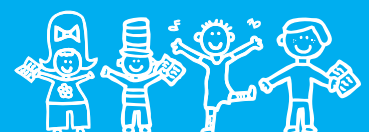
— Elementary School Principal

<sup>1</sup> See [www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org) for research citations.



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# Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

## WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO STOP HURTFUL LANGUAGE & EDUCATE

"That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people's feelings. It's unacceptable to say that to a classmate. All students are welcome here at (name of school)."

"In this classroom, I want everyone to be respected. Making negative comments about a person's skin color is very disrespectful and will not be accepted."

"Do you know what that word means? It's a put-down for someone's religion. There are many different religions in this world and in this school we respect all religions."

"You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but saying 'That's gay' can hurt those around you. Do you know what 'gay' means?"

- If the answer is "no," a simple response could be, "The word 'gay' is used to describe a man and a man or a woman and a woman, who love each other and may want to be family to each other" or
- "In the future, I expect you to use that word respectfully and not in a hurtful way."

"That is not okay. I will not allow someone to be left out in this classroom because of where they come from or how they talk."

"It's true that some boys don't like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some people like to draw and some don't, and some people like to play kickball and others don't. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because they are a boy or a girl."

## ENGAGE STUDENTS IN TEACHABLE MOMENTS

- When elementary school students use language based on bias about another child's identity, they may just be repeating what they have heard. They may have no idea how hurtful that language is.
- Instead of just, "Don't say this," follow up with open-ended questions like:
  - "Why do you think it's wrong for boys to wear pink?"
  - "Why did you think it was okay to make fun of the way someone looks?"
  - "Do you know what the word 'faggot' means?"
  - "Where have you heard that kind of language before?"

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

— 2nd Grade Teacher

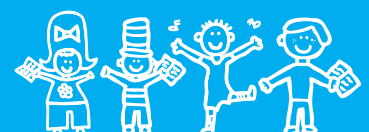


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## RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS: AN INTERACTIVE SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE

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

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

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

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

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

### ACTIVITY

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



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## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS**

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

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

### **ABOUT FAMILIES WITH GAY OR LESBIAN PARENTS**

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

### **ABOUT GENDER**

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

### **QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR COLLEAGUES**

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

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS**

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

*Developed by Lesley Strang, early childhood educator, and edited by Emmy Howe, Open View Farm Educational Center, Conway, Mass. See: [www.openviewfarm.org](http://www.openviewfarm.org).*

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## PRACTICING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS

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*(Sample responses are in italics)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**“Can two boys or two girls get married?”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**TALKING WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Welcoming Schools



A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

A comprehensive approach to improve elementary school climate with resources, lessons and tools to:

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



Professional development film from Welcoming Schools:  
***What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying and Bystanders***

Features teachers using Welcoming Schools' lesson plans to engage students in conversations about bullying and the power of standing up for each other. To watch clips, buy DVD, obtain guide and lesson plans, go to:  
[welcomingschools.org/whatcanwedo](http://welcomingschools.org/whatcanwedo)



Award-winning short film:  
***What Do You Know? Six- to Twelve-Year Olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians***

Hear what students know about gay and lesbian people, what they hear at school and what they'd like teachers to do. To watch clips, buy the DVD, and find training materials, go to:  
[welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow](http://welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow)

## Welcoming Schools will help your school...

- **Make teachable moments productive:** Learn how to respond to students' difficult questions and comments — including "What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay'?" or "Addressing Gender Put-downs."
- **Teach lesson plans based on inclusion and respect:** Over 25 lessons aligned with national standards on family diversity, gender and bias-based bullying.
- **Integrate a gender- and LGBT-inclusive approach** into your current social emotional learning (SEL) or anti-bullying program — including alignment with Second Step or Olweus.
- **Find up-to-date recommendations of diverse books:** Both picture books and middle readers for use in classrooms and libraries looking at families, LGBT topics, gender, bullying and bias.
- **Get families involved:** Organize family engagement nights and develop leadership teams.
- **Provide professional development and resources:** Contact Welcoming Schools at [welcomingschools@hrc.org](mailto:welcomingschools@hrc.org)



“Helps schools move toward equity and excellence.”

— Maureen Costello  
Director, Teaching Tolerance  
Southern Poverty Law Center



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