



SCHOOL-BASED COMMUNITY BUILDING EVENT WITH *WHAT DO YOU KNOW?*

LEVEL: Parents/guardians and educators.

LENGTH OF TIME: 90 minutes in the evening.

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; 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*](#); 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.



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- 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.

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?
- 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 (To find ways to respond to questions like these in *Responding to Questions About LGBTQ Topics: An Interactive Skill-Building Exercise* or [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-downs on Gender.](#))

- 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?