

**"It's Elementary is the most important film dealing with LGBT issues and safe schools ever made..."**

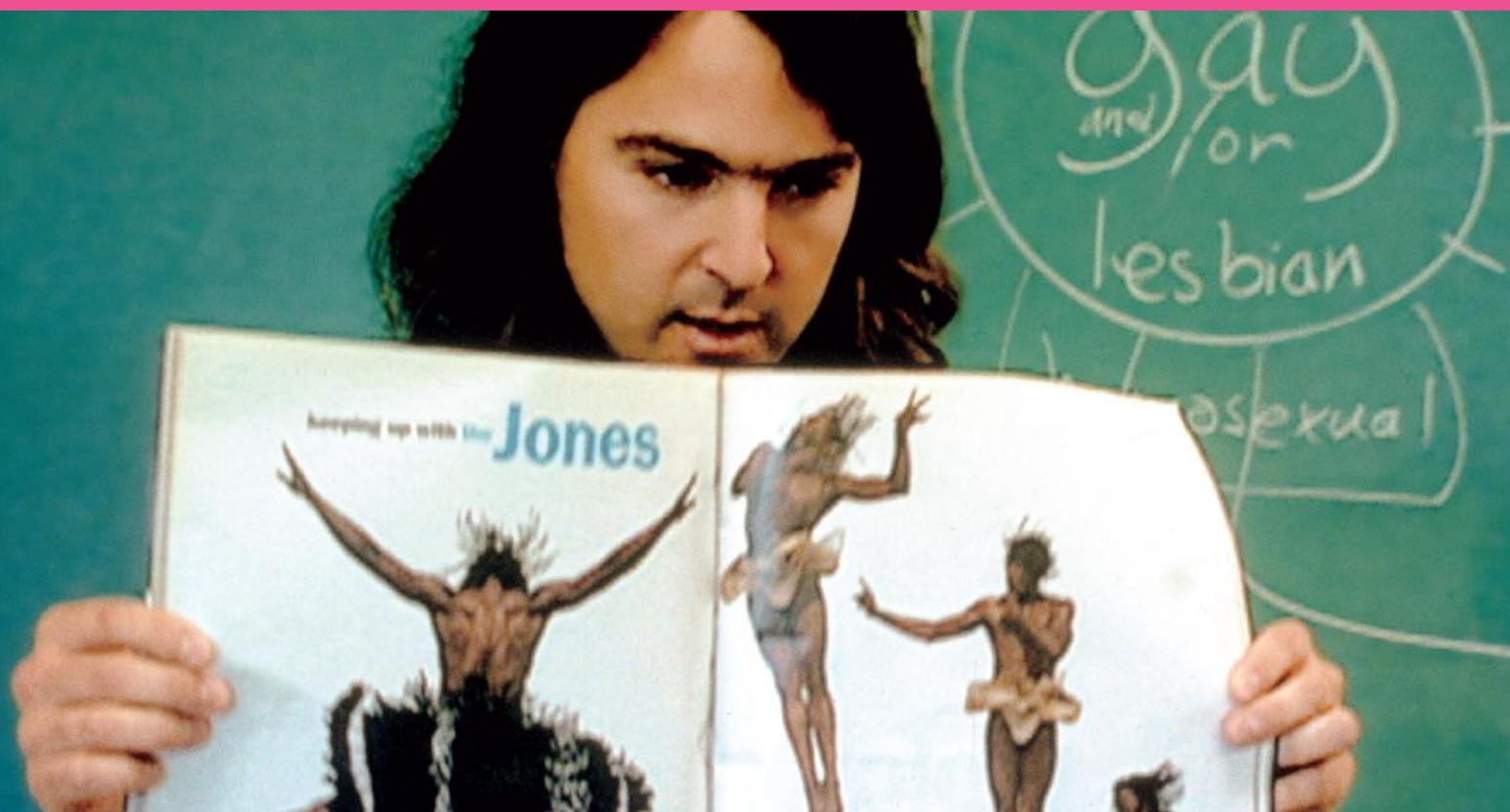
Kevin Jennings, founder, Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network



# It's Elementary

TALKING ABOUT GAY ISSUES IN SCHOOL

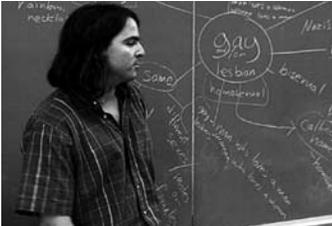
A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND K-8 CURRICULUM



# It's Elementary

TALKING ABOUT GAY ISSUES IN SCHOOL

**A Guide For Community Organizing,  
Professional Development,  
And K-8 Curriculum**



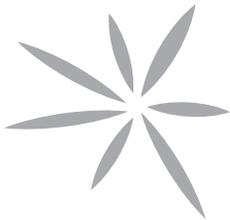


***It's Elementary*** was the spark that ignited a national campaign to help youth and the adults who guide their development talk openly about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues and diversity of all kinds. The campaign grew into a national program that has brought award-winning documentary films, high-quality curriculum guides and professional development to thousands of educators and youth service providers across the country.

The Respect For All Project is a program of GoundSpark, a national non-profit documentary film and education organization that focuses on social justice issues. The Respect For All Project's educational resources and workshops are designed to open up dialogue, cultivate empathy, build compassion and promote understanding so that schools, communities and organizations become more welcoming and safe places for all children and families. The Respect For All Project approaches this very important work through a framework that explores not only anti-LGBT prejudice and bias, but also the multiple forms of exclusion, bias and prejudice that can strain human relationships and compromise the healthy development of all children.

We hope that you are inspired to use our resources and join the worldwide campaign to end anti-LGBT prejudice. Workshops and professional development related to ***It's Elementary*** and other Respect For All films are available for schools, community groups, non-profit organizations, parent-teacher associations, universities and religious organizations.

Please visit our website, [www.respectforall.org](http://www.respectforall.org), for more information about The Respect For All Project and be sure to sign up for our e-newsletter that will keep you up-to-date on new resources and materials for your personal and professional educational library.



**GROUNDSPARK**  
IGNITING CHANGE THROUGH FILM

### **GroundSpark Mission Statement**

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GroundSpark creates visionary films and dynamic educational campaigns that move individuals and communities to take action for a more just world.

For more information please call 1-800-405-3322 or go to [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org).

# A Message From The Producers

## Why We Made *It's Elementary*

When we first released *It's Elementary* in 1996, we each had children in preschool and elementary school. We could see first-hand how social values—including attitudes about “being gay”—actually start to develop at a very young age. The prevailing assumption among adults in most school communities, though, was that topics related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people are not at all relevant to children’s lives—and that there are no age-appropriate ways to address these subjects in the classroom.

We decided to make *It's Elementary* to challenge these assumptions and to encourage all adults who care about children’s safety, self-worth and innate sense of compassion and fairness to take a fresh look at the importance of having school curricula and policies that are LGBT-inclusive.

We found the best way to open public dialogue on this controversial issue was to capture on film what it actually looks like when teachers talk about LGBT people, families and prejudice with their students in a matter-of-fact way. By bringing our cameras into classrooms where teachers were doing what most educators still find mystifying or politically impossible, we hoped to inspire others to take the next step—large or small—in their own school communities.

We wanted to demonstrate that:

- *All* children are dramatically affected by anti-gay prejudice, and most, by a relatively young age, already have had “exposure” to LGBT-related information, unfortunately most of it misleading and harmful.
- *All* educators—regardless of their sexual orientation—can be powerful role models for their students; they can demonstrate through their words and actions in the classroom that everyone, including LGBT people, deserves to be recognized and to be treated with respect.
- *All* schools, at all grade levels, must address these issues, and that to truly prevent prejudice and the violence that often stems from it, we must begin in elementary school. If we wait until middle or high school, the task—if it is done at all—becomes one of “unlearning” prejudice, rather than preventing it.

Today, each of our children is much older than when we first started! But the issues we set out to address are still as important and timely as they were in 1996. *It's Elementary* has been used in thousands of communities to build safer and more welcoming schools, where all children are embraced for who they truly are. It has opened up necessary public debate to include a much fuller spectrum of perspectives than before. We trust that you, too, will find a way to use the film, this new curriculum guide and our new companion documentary, *It's STILL Elementary*, to make a difference in your community.



Debra Chasnoff



Helen S. Cohen

# ***It's Elementary—Talking About Gay Issues In School*** **A Guide for Community Organizing, Professional Development and K-8 Curriculum**

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## **Major funding for *It's Elementary, It's STILL Elementary* and this guide comes from the following foundations:**

Abacot Fund of Community Foundation Sonoma County  
The Columbia Foundation  
The Ford Foundation  
The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation  
The Gill Foundation  
Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund  
CS&B Fund of the Community Foundation Sonoma County  
The L.P. Brown Foundation

**Cover Design** Six Ink

**Guide Design and Layout** Free Range Studios

**The Respect For All Project Co-Founders** Helen Cohen and Debra Chasnoff

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*We would also like to acknowledge the hundreds of generous individual donors and family foundations that contributed to this project.*

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# STILL It's Elementary

TALKING ABOUT GAY ISSUES IN SCHOOL

As we re-issue ***It's Elementary*** for a new generation of educators to consider, we take stock of the progress that has been made since the film was first released in 1996, and call upon schools and communities to increase their efforts to promote respect for all with the following call to action.

## A CALL TO ACTION

**We believe schools can be caring communities in which everyone has the opportunity to be engaged, included and respected, regardless of his or her sexual orientation or gender expression. We envision schools that are free of anti-gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender prejudice and harassment, in which all students can realize their full potential. For the well-being of youth and their communities, we call on all community members, including students, families, educators, administrators, school boards and law-makers to help realize this vision.**

## Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

### STUDENTS

**All students have the right to attend a school that is free of anti-LGBT prejudice and harassment, where they feel comfortable and supported as learners and contributors to their school community.** Students of all ages must be given an opportunity to learn that the words “gay” and “lesbian” are adjectives that should be used with respect to describe people in their community, not words used in a negative way to hurt, insult and degrade. Students should be encouraged to reflect on their own actions and prejudice, learn from their peers who are different from them, and support allies who stand up to prejudice and hate.

### FAMILIES

**All families with children have the right to be represented, discussed and welcomed in the classroom regardless of their configuration, including those with LGBT family members.** Classroom activities, particularly at the elementary school level, should model the appropriate vocabulary to accurately describe different family configurations. School communications to families should be inclusive of all family types and should not assume that all children live with two married, heterosexual parents.

## EDUCATORS

**All teachers have the right, and the responsibility, to weave respectful, age-appropriate messages about LGBT people and issues into their lessons and classrooms.** Educators should not need to seek approval or have parental consent to discuss LGBT people and issues in the classroom in age-appropriate ways, unless the discussion involves actual sexual practices. At each grade level, instruction should communicate that LGBT people are part of the community and that anti-LGBT discrimination and harassment is harmful to everyone. Teachers of all subjects must be supported and encouraged to combine core curriculum with activities that address bias and build a positive school climate.

## ADMINISTRATORS

**All school administrators have the right, and the responsibility, to establish positive school environments that are safe, welcoming and promote the healthy development of everyone in the school community.** Teachers, families and students look to school leaders to convey the importance of safe and inclusive learning environments. By creating awareness, implementing programs and providing leadership, administrators can ensure that schools are safe for *all* students and families, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression. School personnel at all grade levels must be given the skills and support to interrupt anti-LGBT harassment, and to engage in dialogue with students about how and why such harassment is harmful to everyone in the school community.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**All school boards have the right, and the responsibility, to develop and fund initiatives to address prejudice and harassment.** School boards must be representative of their entire community and thus need

to support programs that make school climates safer and more inclusive. If school boards are to increase academic achievement and ensure the safety of all their students and employees, they must be proactive about responding to anti-LGBT bias and harassment. School board members must put the well-being of children above politics.

## CURRICULUM DIRECTORS

**Curriculum leaders should help teachers understand where lessons about LGBT people and issues can be included appropriately in the context of existing curriculum guidelines for each grade level, kindergarten through twelve.** There are age-appropriate ways to be inclusive in lessons about families, communities, history, literature, current events, art, music, theater, even mathematics and science.

## LAWMAKERS

**All state and local officials have the responsibility to enact and support legislation that protects students from harassment based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender expression.** All students have a federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law. This means that schools have a duty to protect all students—including LGBT students—from harassment. Yet, anti-LGBT bias is present in classrooms and hallways across the country because educators lack local legal support to address prejudice. To date, only ten states have comprehensive anti-bullying laws that protect students on the basis of sexual orientation, and only five states have laws that protect on the basis of gender expression. Every state must provide students with this protection.

## About This Guide

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Preventing anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice among children helps move society closer to full equality and respect for all. Since the original release of ***It's Elementary*** in 1996, educators, parents, principals and professors have shared hundreds of stories about how they have used this film to bring us close to this goal. In this new edition of the film's accompanying guide, we draw upon their stories to offer inspiration, provide further guidance and share additional resources for creating LGBT-inclusive schools.

Overall we designed this guide to serve as a clearinghouse of ideas and resources for using ***It's Elementary*** to make change on many levels in the classroom, in schools of education, with school boards and within communities. With this in mind, we have included information that supports the use of the film both as a tool for community organizing and as a tool for professional development.

There are six sections in this guide. Each section includes specific references to the film, helpful websites and cross-references other sections of the guide where related resources can be found. In addition, we have assembled a handful of lessons and resources specifically for teachers to use as part of direct classroom instruction.

We hope this new and expanded guide offers useful tools and guidance for your contribution to this very important work. Share your stories with us by visiting our website at [www.respectforall.org](http://www.respectforall.org).

## The Importance Of LGBT-Inclusive Education

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Gay Straight Alliances in high schools; same-sex couples going to the prom; children's books about two-dad families; a children's public television show that features a blended family with two moms...

**With all this visibility in the media, it is easy to assume that the problems of anti-gay and lesbian bias, teasing and harassment are things of the past.** But, sadly, homophobia and heterosexism are still very much present in many of our schools and communities. These biases manifest themselves in covert and overt ways, from invisibility in the curriculum and school policies to active teasing, bullying, harassment and physical violence against, gender-variant children, youth who identify or are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), and families that include LGBT parents or relatives. While nearly all stakeholders in education (political leaders, teachers, administrators, parents and community members) proclaim themselves to be

advocates of safe schools, they often simultaneously deny that addressing homophobia is a critical element in making schools safe. Even schools that have active anti-bullying programs often tacitly condone teasing and harassment of students targeted for their non-conformance to sex and gender roles.

**This bias hurts all children**, both those directly and visibly affected and those who learn and grow in an atmosphere of fear and tension, afraid to explore their own lives and possibilities because of worry about disapproval and rejection. Making schools safer and more accepting for gender variant children, families with LGBT parents and relatives and for LGBT youth helps make schools better for everyone. Looking carefully at our curriculum, our pedagogy and how we establish accepting classroom and school climates improves the educational experience for all students, families and teachers.

**Addressing these issues within professional development programs** for pre-service and current teachers is a logical strategy for changing what teachers know and understand about LGBT people and issues and helping them acquire skills for actively increasing students' and family members' awareness. We expect teacher education programs to prepare teachers to deal thoughtfully and responsively to issues of race and racism in the classroom, ensuring that all students feel represented, welcomed and well-treated regardless of skin color. Similarly we can expect that all teachers be committed to and competent in creating classrooms and school environments that send a strong message that homophobia is not tolerated and that all sexual orientations and forms of gender expression are welcome.

***It's Elementary* is an important resource for beginning this discussion** with teachers and helping them uncover their own histories, experiences and attitudes. The film's examples of ways in which educators are teaching about LGBT people and issues with students of all ages are a powerful entry into discussing curricular and pedagogical options in their own classroom teaching settings.

**In addition to the film, the *It's Elementary Guide* pulls together ten years of accumulated wisdom, insight and promising practices.** As an invaluable resource it provides tools for community dialogue, professional development and concrete classroom lessons. This guide offers ways to build respectful school communities that respond to anti-LGBT bias and prejudice and create welcoming, caring and safe learning environments for all children and their families.



## The Term LGBT

There are many terms used to describe what is often referred to as the "gay community." But the word "gay" most often refers to homosexual men; in the places where it is appropriate, we have chosen to use the more inclusive term "LGBT," which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Though this term may sound unfamiliar at first, we encourage you to use it consistently with your students and avoid reflexively using "gay" to describe the broad spectrum of sexual and gender identities. There are many people within the LGBT communities who use a variety of other terms to describe themselves, including queer, questioning, same gender loving and pansexual. Though we have chosen to use LGBT consistently here, we encourage you to respect the terms that individuals in your community have chosen to describe themselves.



# 2

## **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**



## Voices Of Change

**Chloe Moushey**

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**From *It's STILL Elementary***

"The fact that people think that if someone is educated about gay issues that they're more likely to become gay is absurd, to say the least. I mean, I'm straight. And I think that learning about these things that people don't usually talk about has given me tools to ask questions about other issues. Education is never wrong. If you present the facts and you allow someone to think about it for themselves, I don't think there are very many downsides of that."



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***Chloe Moushey, a third-grader in, It's Elementary, who is stunned to learn that Elton John is a gay man; in It's STILL Elementary a student at Drury University in Missouri.***

# Sparking Change

Precious few of us have had the chance to observe an adult talk respectfully about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people with a group of children. In fact, many of us have not had much chance to watch *any* prejudice-reduction lessons in action. The whole idea can feel overwhelming and confusing if you have not ever seen it done. That is why many caring adults have been seeking exactly what ***It's Elementary*** offers: a chance to see real teachers with real students doing simple lesson plans about this subject matter. People suddenly and unexpectedly begin to realize that there really are age-appropriate ways to address LGBT issues in elementary and middle school classrooms.

With ***It's Elementary*** we have the opportunity to watch teachers help children with LGBT parents and guardians feel more welcome at school and help their classmates imagine what it is like to walk in those children's shoes. We see teachers help students question their own stereotypes and consider for the first time how thoughtless slurs might hurt someone. We see school administrators leading the way, showing that it really is possible and valuable to end the taboo of addressing the real lives of everybody in the school community. We see parents embracing the idea of preventing LGBT teens' self-harm through early, inclusive education.

The film can be an effective tool to allay fears and spark change within the parent/guardian community. Once they see how ready children are to have these important conversations, parents and guardians come away with a commitment to talk with their own children about prejudice and bullying. They appreciate the importance of discussing diverse families, respecting differences and the history of social justice movements. They trust that schools can address these issues, and can dispel children's myths and misunderstandings without promoting any particular sexual orientation or gender identity. Parents who walk in to a screening feeling skeptical often leave supporting the school's efforts to create a safe, non-discriminatory learning environment that values every child's success.

***It's Elementary*** has been shown in colleges of education and used in professional development workshops for school districts. Once teachers, counselors and administrators have seen someone comfortably address LGBT issues in the classroom, they realize that you can teach LGBT-inclusive content without children dissolving into hurtful laughter and understand that it is not about sexual behavior but about human beings. Often they are then much more ready to actually invest in learning how to teach and create truly safe and welcoming schools. The film provides a shared experience creating an opportunity for invaluable conversations to happen. Together with this guide, communities will find they have a resource that can help them build respectful and welcoming learning environments.



# Taking Action In Your School Community

School districts around the country have made enormous progress toward establishing safe respectful school environments—largely because of efforts that began with only a few people and then grew into significant support networks that influenced major policies. Here are some ideas of where to begin.

## Assess Your School Environment

Take some time to reflect on the ways that your school is welcoming and inclusive and identify areas that need more work. In your assessment make sure you consider classroom and school ground climate, student instruction, staff development and family/community outreach.

- Are written materials (publications, flyers, handbooks, official forms, library books) inclusive? Do they acknowledge and represent different kinds of families (including but not limited to single parents, guardians and LGBT parents)? Are they sensitive to the different language needs of families (for example are they translated)?
- Are jokes, statements or actions that put down a group of people, including LGBT people, routinely challenged?
- What programs are in place to address social climate, bias, prejudice, name calling, and bullying?
- Has the school held adequate, meaningful diversity trainings or other required discussions to help faculty, staff and students address LGBT issues in the school community?
- Is there viable access to support for LGBT-headed families, students and staff?
- Is there at least one designated staff person who is aware of community resources, services and openly supportive adults (LGBT and non-LGBT) who serve as positive role models?
- Are students supported if they choose to write about LGBT-related issues for school projects or in school publications?
- Where do you feel you will have the most challenges in the above areas to help your community understand the importance of LGBT-inclusive instruction and policies?



### It's True

75.4% of students heard derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke”

frequently or often at school, and nearly nine out of ten (89.2%) reported hearing “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay”—meaning stupid or worthless—frequently or often.

*National School Climate Survey, GLSEN, 2005*

## Research Your School's Policies

Over the past ten years a number of states and school districts have adopted safe school policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. What are the safe school policies in effect at your school and do these policies include protection for LGBT staff, students and families? Some things to keep in mind as you research your school's policies:

- Are there anti-discrimination, anti-harassment or human relations policies that protect staff, students and families?
- Do the policies provide for protection from harassment or discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity or expression?
- Are there clearly stated rights and responsibilities of students including the right not to experience harassment and the responsibility to treat others with respect?
- What are the requirements for parental permission? Although permission is often needed for students to take health or family life classes, it is rarely required for discussions on learning about and respecting differences in social studies, language arts or other lessons.

## Find Allies

Begin with people you trust. Invite them to consider what is needed and who should be involved in bringing LGBT-inclusive education to your school. Remember that both straight and LGBT members of the faculty, administration and families can be allies; above all, try to avoid prejudging people as either "for" or "against." Even well-intentioned, caring educators and parents have absorbed society's negative views of LGBT people and may not have had a safe opportunity to address their fears, stereotypes and concerns. If you allow everyone the chance to learn, you may be surprised who becomes your best ally. Some schools have found success by creating a task force made up of teachers, staff, family members and an administrator.



### In This Guide

Further discussion on developing safe school policies at your school site, see *Legal Considerations and Safe School Policies* on page 109.



### It's True

In 1990, only one state, Wisconsin, protected students against discrimination based on sexual orientation. As of 2007, ten states (California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia have passed legislation specifically protecting LGBT students from harassment and discrimination and only five states (California, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota and New Jersey) protect students based on gender expression.

*GLSEN Press Release, Iowa Becomes 10th State to Pass Comprehensive Safe Schools Bill*

# Common Questions About LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum

## Why is LGBT-Inclusive curriculum necessary?

Sadly, homophobia and heterosexism are still very much present in many of our schools and communities. These biases manifest themselves many ways, from invisibility in the curriculum and school policies to active teasing, bullying, harassment and physical violence against, gender-variant children, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), and families that include LGBT parents or relatives. This bias hurts all children, both those directly affected and those who learn in an atmosphere of fear and tension, afraid to explore their own lives because of worry about disapproval and rejection.

Students of all ages must be given an opportunity to learn that the words “gay” and “lesbian” are adjectives that should be used with respect to describe people in their community, not words used in a negative way to hurt, insult and degrade. Students need to be encouraged to reflect on their own actions and prejudice, learn from their peers who are different from them and support allies who stand up to prejudice and hate. Creating inclusive curriculum and establishing accepting classroom and school climates improves the educational experience for all students, families and teachers.

## Are elementary school children too young to be introduced to this topic?

Unfortunately name-calling and using anti-gay slurs starts as early as kindergarten, first- and second-grades. In the film you can see children at a very young age have already been introduced to information about LGBT people, which is often based on misinformation and negative stereotypes. When teachers are silent about gay and lesbian people, students learn from this omission that it is acceptable to use anti-gay put-downs. Anti-gay slurs are hurtful and unacceptable and they affect the lives of people in every school and community. Teachers are not introducing a new topic, they are helping young students understand bias and prejudice and learn to use respectful language. Educators are creating inclusive school communities that prevent name-calling, teasing and bullying and provide safe learning environments for all children.

## Do parents and guardians need to be notified if LGBT people or families are discussed in the classroom?

In many school districts, there are guidelines about what classroom activities require parent/guardian notification. Most school districts do not have a requirement for notifying parents and guardians for lessons about respect and diversity. In fact, many districts require schools to be proactive in addressing bias and prejudice and ensuring students safety. Discussions related to sexuality and reproduction are examples of topics that often require parental permission. But these topics are not a part of the curriculum advocated in *It's Elementary—Talking About Gay Issues In School*. The focus of LGBT-inclusive education is to create respectful and welcoming learning environments for all children by communicating that LGBT people are part of our communities and that anti-LGBT discrimination is harmful to everyone.

However, we strongly recommend involving parents and guardians as part of school-wide efforts to be more inclusive. As important members of the school community, families can help reinforce the concepts of respect at home, help answer questions, assist in classroom discussions and be actively engaged in making the school and community safe for all children and their families.

## Can parents/guardians “opt out” of their children’s participation in school instruction that includes LGBT-inclusive lessons?

Most school districts have limited and clear guidelines about offering parents and guardians the right to have their children “opt out” of specific school instruction. Programs that are designed to encourage respect and address bias typically are not included in “opt out” policies. By not including all students in LGBT-inclusive lessons, schools run the risk of conveying a message that it is somehow acceptable to engage in hurtful and disrespectful behavior when it comes to LGBT people. We strongly discourage schools from allowing students to miss lessons where people and families—not sexual practices—are discussed. Often times those students are among those who might benefit the most from being with their peers when community values around respect and understanding are addressed.

### **How do we comply with anti-discrimination laws and still respect the religious and cultural diversity of our students and their families?**

Simply stated, an anti-bias program is designed to create a space in which all students can learn, achieve their goals, and realize success. Anti-bias curricula encourages respect, cooperation and understanding, values that all religions and cultures hold in common. In fact, by giving students a language to discuss these sensitive issues, families may find it easier to share their own religious beliefs about human difference. Anti-bias programs do not try to change those deeply held views, but ensure that the diversity of opinions in school communities do not create a negative climate of insults, violence, and exclusion. Part of that work is ensuring that children can be proud of their own religious and cultural heritage without being marginalized.

### **Is talking about LGBT issues the same as sex education?**

Talking about LGBT issues is a discussion about people and families present in our communities, a struggle for civil rights and addressing bias-based bullying. None of these include talking about sex or human reproduction. Many educators once feared that the two were inseparable, and schools in the 1990s typically limited discussions about LGBT people to high school health classes. However, with the rapid growth of LGBT-headed families and the increasing visibility of LGBT issues in the media, children are learning about LGBT people at an increasingly younger age. *It's Elementary* illustrates the use of age-appropriate vocabulary to talk with young people about LGBT issues, without talking about sex. By incorporating LGBT issues in the context of lessons about families, current events, literature and civil rights we can help prevent the stereotypes and misunderstandings that often develop.

### **How can I fit this topic into my already full schedule?**

Teachers are under extraordinary pressures to teach mandated curriculum and increase test scores. Building a safe and welcoming environment that is conducive to learning should not be an extra burden but an added benefit. Lessons about LGBT people and issues can be easily tied to academic standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and life skills. There also are many ways

to integrate LGBT content into existing curricula. For example, instead of a statistics problem about jellybeans in a bowl, offer one on the diversity of your community. The Respect For All Project routinely creates standards alignments with our curricula that can be accessed on our website. Furthermore, by helping students develop mutual respect and understanding, you will find yourself spending less class time addressing behavior issues and more time teaching the required curriculum.

### **What if our anti-bias education programs that are LGBT-inclusive cause controversy in the community?**

Misunderstandings about the purpose and content of anti-bias education programs can happen in any community. It is important to be transparent and open about the intentions and content of the program to avoid accusations that it is part of a larger, hidden "agenda." In fact, you can actually strengthen the bonds of your school community by involving families in your family diversity and anti-bias programs. It is also important to have the support of your school and community leaders, not just to prevent controversy, but also to strengthen the actual work of your program. Key school staff such as principals, counselors and department chairs should be familiar with the content of your program before it is implemented, and understand the reasons why you are doing so. PTA chapters are also an often-overlooked source of support, as are church and youth organizations, and local colleges of education. Members of these groups can provide professional input as to why your program is needed, while also offering insights on how it can be delivered.

If a controversy does arise, it is important to communicate to families that your anti-bias program is supported, or even mandated, by state law and educational policies. Many states and school districts have an anti-harassment policy that includes sexual orientation, or require their staff to receive anti-bias training. Academic standards also often require teaching about diversity in communities and families. Schools have an obligation to ensure all their students are able to learn in a safe environment, and recent court decisions have delivered costly verdicts to schools that fail to do so. Overall, it is important to stand firm on your commitment to addressing biases of all kinds. School districts that have bowed to pressure in the past have only seen the controversy intensify, as new attacks are levied against other curricula and school programs connected to sensitive subjects.

## Voices Of Change

### Timothy Hannapel

Former member of the Piney Branch PTA  
Takoma Park, Maryland

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I first saw *It's Elementary* in the Spring of 1996 at a sold out, packed house as part of a film festival in Washington, D.C. The film had a dramatic impact on me as a then-father of seven- and nine-year-old daughters who often told me of anti-gay comments they heard other kids casually using at school. I remember quite vividly standing up at the end of the movie and saying to my friend, "I need to get this shown at my PTA." I talked to the head of the PTA, and was able to arrange getting a videotape to screen for her. How heartening it was to see that her reaction was similar to mine. She stood up and said, "Oh, we should totally show this to our PTA." And so we did. We showed it at a PTA meeting to a group of 30 to 35 people. The very first mom to put her hand up afterwards asked the principal, "What are the schools doing to implement the county policy that passed last year about non-discrimination?" He replied, "Not much that I know of, but if the PTA wants to form a committee and work with me on it here at Piney Branch, I would do that." It was amazing to witness the galvanizing power of this film: far from people being angry about its seemingly controversial subject, many people were moved to get involved.

The following month a committee was formed. Parents and community members showed up to our meetings who had never been involved in the PTA before. When our committee took the lessons of *It's Elementary* to county school administrators, they agreed to implement mandatory training for teachers to address anti-gay discrimination and name-calling for the first time in Maryland schools. And at the same time, the kitchen-table conversations sparked by the film often resulted in a new "family value" of respect for difference and a commitment to creating hate-free schools.

# Organizing A Community Event Or Screening

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An informal film screening for concerned and interested adults is a great way to start organizing for change in your school or community. Here are some simple steps you can take to get the ball rolling.

## Organizing the Screening

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### Find a Location

Movie nights are most successful when they take place in a space that is comfortable, easily accessible and familiar. Schools, public libraries, community centers and town hall meeting rooms are just a few places to consider. Wherever you choose to host your screening, be sure to confirm that there is enough comfortable seating available for the total number of people who may attend.

### Check the Technology

It is important to make sure that you have the proper audio and visual equipment to show the film to a large audience. Good sound and lighting makes for the best movie experience. You will also need a screen that is large enough for group viewing. Try to avoid spaces with fixed lighting that is not adjustable and spaces that have poor acoustics.

### Get the Word Out

In advance of your screening or community movie night you need to get the word out and generate interest.

- Publish an announcement in the school PTA newsletter, weekly church bulletin, library events calendar or other local publications.
- Print and distribute flyers for colleagues and faculty members.
- Post information about the screening on popular blogs, websites and school district community pages.
- Contact the local newspaper, TV and radio stations to spread the word.
- Send an e-mail announcement to relevant Listservs.





### Screening Tips

The most accessible spaces will offer accommodations for individuals with disabilities and can be reached by even those with limited or no access to private transportation.

Sound quality will vary by space, so it is important to use speaker systems whenever possible. High ceilings and large open spaces, though accommodating of large groups, may not be the best choice for optimal sound quality. Be sure to check with the local facilities manager about sound and lighting questions in advance of your screening.

## The Day Before the Screening

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### Prepare Handouts

You will find a number of useful handouts throughout this guide. Feel free to make copies. In addition, consider making the following materials available as handouts: a list of local resources; the mission statement and relevant policies of your school district; order forms for *It's Elementary*; and samples of age-appropriate books and other materials.

### Equipment Check

Confirm that the audio and video works properly and make sure you have tested the DVD or VHS, checking the sound system and any film projection equipment you are planning to use.

## At the Screening

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### Before the Film

#### Reasons for Showing the Film

Explain why you are showing *It's Elementary* by addressing the film's relevance to your audience. Reasons might include the following:

- There is pervasive anti-gay name-calling at your school.
- Several students have gay or lesbian parents or other family members.
- Some students are struggling with their own sexuality.
- Although your faculty has a commitment to creating a respectful, multi-cultural environment, you feel that awareness of LGBT people has been missing.
- School districts must take a closer look at their responsibility for student safety since the 1996 Jamie Nabozny case, in which school administrators

in Wisconsin were held liable and required to pay damages of nearly \$1 million for failing to protect a gay high school student from harassment and violence.

- Some educators have begun to be inclusive about LGBT-related topics in their classrooms, and some parents have expressed concern, so you want to create a context for discussion.
- Your school has a general policy prohibiting name-calling or harassment, but the curriculum does not include activities to raise students' consciousness about it.
- The school board is discussing whether to expand the district's anti-discrimination policy.
- A gay/straight student alliance is forming in the high school, and students have written letters about their problems in elementary and middle school.

### Share Your Goals

This film can motivate groups to action. Say clearly what you hope the screening will accomplish or lead to. If specific plans are already in place for follow-up that will involve your listeners, describe them (or wait until the discussion afterward). If not, it may be most appropriate simply to state that your goal is to start a dialogue.

### Be a Model for Inclusiveness

Particularly if you expect some of the people in your audience to be hostile, it is important to use language that includes them. For example, you may speak about your hope to create "an environment where *all* children—whatever their race, culture, ethnicity, family background, sexual orientation or religion—are free to be who they are and to learn."

### After the Film Discussion

Even though community movie nights are usually informal gatherings, take some time to prepare for a productive post-film discussion. The following pages offer tips for facilitating discussions and activities that will engage the audience in some personal reflection and dialogue.



### From The Film

"When I feel worried about presenting this to the children and when I

feel worried about repercussions, especially in light of recent politics and things moving to the right, in spite of that, I feel very motivated to keep going with this in my classroom. Because I know how hard it was for me to grow up. And I know that nobody ever gave me any sense that it was OK to be who I was or that there were supports, resources for me, anything. So, if I could even help one child to grow up feeling that it was OK—help them to grow up and not feel so isolated and not feel as though their life was just going to be complete hell, then it's worth it to me." —*Scott Hirschfeld, third-grade teacher in **It's Elementary***

# Voices Of Change

## Renaud Beaudoin

Principal of Newberry Elementary Math and Science Academy  
Chicago, Illinois

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A former parent introduced ***It's Elementary*** to Newberry Academy at a critical moment when some issues started arising among students, parents and staff around a teacher coming out. Tension started to escalate. We decided to hold an inclusive meeting with parents and teachers where *It's Elementary* would be screened.

The film provided a reference point to speak about gay issues in a thoughtful manner. One teacher told the story of constantly being ridiculed in high school for being perceived as gay. He wasn't gay and felt that such remarks were inappropriate and unfair. Many of us identified with his story. Parents were also able to express their concerns about gay issues in public schools. By the end of the meeting, we seemed unanimously to come to the understanding that talking openly about gay issues in school is necessary in order to fulfill our school's all-inclusive mission. Even though ***It's Elementary*** wasn't about our particular school, it was a reflection of what we were going through as a school.

Initially, I wasn't so enthusiastic about the idea of teaching LGBT-inclusive curriculum to my students. But after our meeting I realized, no, we've got to deal with this right now. We've got to take some proactive steps to not let LGBT issues simmer and fester as a source of animosity for some and a source of hurt for others. As a principal, addressing what could have been a potential problem at my school helped me grow not only in terms of dealing with LGBT issues but in terms of dealing with any sort of difficult issue that comes in the building.

Over time we created an environment at Newberry School where parents, students and teachers all have respect for one another. Regardless of orientation, race or class, parents share similar hopes and dreams for their children. When parents of all backgrounds were asking our librarian if they could take out ***It's Elementary*** for a weekend to show their children, I realized something had shifted in our community. Having the chance to use *It's Elementary* at Newberry Academy has been an important step both in my career and for the progress of our school.

# Facilitating Workshops And Presentations

Watching the film and having a facilitated discussion can help educators, parents/guardians and community members think more deeply about what students already know—or think they know—about LGBT people. Through use of the film, audiences understand more fully the reasons that an educator might bring up the topic of LGBT people, and how students respond to such conversations. By listening to the adults and students in the film, adults can assess what kind of conversations they would like to have with young people.

The following activities can be combined in different ways to create workshops that meet the needs of individual groups or engage your audience at a community screening. As you prepare a workshop or presentation consider who will be your primary audience and what activities will be most useful to this group. Be clear about your goals for the workshop—are you hoping to begin a dialogue or help educators think about implementing curriculum? The following exercises are designed to engage educators and community members in dialogue and demystify what it means to talk about LGBT people with children and youth.

## **WORKSHOP ACTIVITY** **A DISCUSSION OF EARLY MESSAGES**

This exercise is a way for audience members to reflect on a few important topics:

1. What kinds of messages did you receive about LGBT people as children?
2. How did these messages affect the way you currently see LGBT people?
3. What kinds of messages about LGBT people do children receive now?

By having a chance to reflect upon these questions before the film, audience members will develop a context for examining their own reactions to the film. They can also use these reflections to delve more deeply into what children know already about LGBT people and how capable they are of having conversations about LGBT people. This exercise can be done with large or small groups.

## **Sample Agenda**

The agenda might look like the following for a 2-3 hour workshop:

1. Introduction/Icebreaker (10-15 min)
2. Early Messages Activity (15-30 min)
3. ***It's Elementary*** (Educational Training Version) (37 min)
4. Post-screening Discussion or Responding to Quotes from the Film (20-30 min)
5. Answering Difficult Questions (20-35 min)
6. Brainstorming Next Steps (15-30 min)

**Audience:** Educators, parents, guardians, community members.

**Materials:** Chart paper and markers.

**Time Needed:** 15-30 minutes before showing the film.

**Preparation:** Write the following headings on a piece of easel paper:

| Message | Age | From | +/-/neutral |

### Instructions:

- Explain to the audience that you are going to give them a chance to reflect upon the kinds of messages they received about LGBT people when they were young. Ask them to think back to the first time they heard anything about LGBT people. Ask them to consider what was said, who said it, how old they were, and whether the message was positive, negative or neutral. You might want to share a couple of possible examples such as: *Maybe when you were eight-years-old you heard a relative call someone a faggot. You didn't know what it meant but you knew it was something negative. There may have been a Little League coach that called boys "girls" when they flinched catching pop flies and you, in turn, learned that flinching was unmanly and that girls were weak. Or maybe when you were ten years old your mother explained to you that your aunt was in a relationship with a woman and that they were in love—and this was presented in a positive way.*
- Give the audience some time to recall their earliest messages and then ask them to turn to a person next to them and share their recollections. Give the pairs three to five minutes to share their experiences, checking in to make sure that each person has time to speak.
- Ask for a show of hands indicating how many people recalled messages that were negative. Then ask the same for positive and neutral messages.
- Ask for some people to volunteer what they remembered and record their answers on the easel paper.
- Once you have about seven to ten responses ask them to look at the list and see what patterns they notice.
  - » If they are reticent to respond, ask specifically: What kinds of messages did most people get? From whom? Did anything surprise you?
  - » If most of the messages were from parents or other adults in authority, then ask: Do children at a young age usually challenge the messages they receive from trusted adults in their lives?
  - » Finally, ask the group: Do you think that children today receive similar or different messages than those reflected on the easel paper and where do you think those messages come from?
- Introduce the film and ask the audience to pay particular attention to the



kinds of messages that the children in the film received about LGBT people outside the classroom and from whom. Then ask them to reflect on the messages they are hearing during the lessons being taught.

- As a closing exercise, ask participants: What messages would you like children to receive about LGBT people?

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### **WORKSHOP ACTIVITY**

### **POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION**

If you have limited time for discussion after showing the film, the following questions can help audience members discuss critical elements of the film. These questions are designed to elicit immediate reactions to the film. Depending on the size of the group, you can ask people to discuss these questions in pairs, small groups or as a whole group. These questions can be used in conjunction with the Early Messages Exercise and Answering Difficult Questions.

**Audience:** Educators, parents, guardians, community members.

**Time Needed:** 20-30 minutes after showing the film.

#### **Instructions:**

Ask audience members to respond to one or more of the following questions in pairs, small groups, or as a whole group. If you have smaller group discussions, leave time for each group to report to the whole group the themes and/or questions that were present in the group.

- What surprised you in this film?
  - Who was one person with whom you identified in the film? Why?
  - Were you surprised by the messages that students had received about LGBT people and where they had received them?
  - What kinds of conversations do you think your students and/or children have had about LGBT people?
  - What are the benefits of having these kinds of conversations with students?
  - What are the challenges of having these kinds of conversations with students?
  - What changes would you like to see in your school community?
  - What are some next steps you will take?
- 



## WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

### RESPONDING TO QUOTES FROM THE FILM

This activity gives participants the opportunity to revisit key moments and strong opinions expressed in the film. It can help the group respect diversity of opinions and clarify their own values regarding including LGBT people and issues in classroom discussions.

**Audience:** Educators, parents, guardians, community members.

**Materials:** Statements made by people in the film on individual cards.

**Time needed:** 20-30 minutes after showing the film.

#### Activity 1

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- Form groups of four to six people
- Explain to the group that you have cards with statements from different people in the film and that you are going to ask each group to discuss the cards. Hand each group at least two different cards. (It is OK to have different groups discussing the same statements.) Ask them to discuss:
  - » What they agree with in each statement.
  - » What they disagree with in each statement.
  - » What questions each statement raises.
- Lead a full group discussion about the questions raised by the statements.

#### Activity 2

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- Hand out cards to volunteers and ask them to read each one aloud to the whole group.
- After hearing the statements, prompt conversation with questions such as:
  - » What themes do you hear in these statements?
  - » Are there any particular statements with which you identify?
  - » What questions do these statements raise for you?
  - » Do you think that certain statements represent a majority view among school staff, parents or students? Why or why not?



#### Facilitator Note

Choose either Activity 1 or Activity 2 depending on the size of your group, the

amount of time you have, and your assessment of how willing group members are to talk in the large group.

## Sample Statements

Note: All statements are in both the feature length and training versions of the film unless otherwise noted.



My culture taught me that to be gay or lesbian was wrong—it was taboo. I brought that with me because I don't stop being Puerto Rican when I enter this building, so I had to work really hard on that. I think I'm a better teacher now because I know that I have to be here for all of my students. I have to affirm who they are and for my children who are children of gay or lesbian parents—to create an environment in which they feel comfortable coming and saying, "Last night I went out for pizza with my two moms," or "My two dads and I, we went out swimming." I know what it's like to not be affirmed, because I was not as a child. —*First- and Second-grade teacher, Cambridge Friends School, Quaker School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

### It's Elementary

Kids hear this information all the time and what they're getting mostly is a lot of misinformation, a lot of stereotypes that are getting reinforced over and over again. And there's this fear that when you're talking about gays and lesbians you're talking about sex. That's not true. You're talking about a community and people relating to each other. I don't think that talking about gay and lesbian sex is appropriate with elementary school students. But talking about people in different communities and biases and discrimination and how that affects people's lives is appropriate. —*Fourth-grade teacher, Public School 87, New York, New York.*

### It's Elementary

I was curious why the exhibit *Love Makes A Family*, was going to be here in our school. The way it worked out, the way the kids responded here today, I think they responded very well to it. I've taught here for 22 years and I haven't specifically done anything on gays and lesbians. It did make me feel that they are ready for a lot more than I had given them credit for. —*Fifth-grade teacher, Peabody Elementary School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

### It's Elementary

I think he [another parent] kept his daughter at home on Friday. He really thinks that his daughter is too young. If they are going to be sending permission slips to do this, that and the other—what are they going to do when they start talking about Mexican American history, or the Dutch, or African-American history? I just have a problem with it, I do. —*Fifth-grade parent, Hawthorne Elementary, Madison, Wisconsin. (Feature-length film only.)*

### It's Elementary

As a school are we saying kids have to support gay issues? If a child comes from a background that says homosexuality is not correct, are we telling that child that they are supposed to disagree? I get the feeling that if they're coming from that background, we're supposed to tell them homosexuality is right. I just want to make sure that if students don't agree, they too are accepted for their opinion. —*Third-grade teacher, Cambridge Friends School, Quaker School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.*

### It's Elementary

When I first brought this up students would say, "Why are you so interested in this? Are you gay?" The implication was that the only person who could possibly be interested in this would be gay people. I explained to them why I, as a straight man, would be interested in this issue. It pushes them to think about this as more than just a gay or lesbian matter. —*Eighth-grade teacher, Luther Burbank Middle School, San Francisco, California.*

### It's Elementary

If kids are too young to be taught about homosexuality, then they're too young to be taught about heterosexuality. If you're going to read *Cinderella* you should read the one about when the two princesses go to the ball and fall in love and live happily ever after. —*Eighth-grade student, Manhattan Country School, New York, New York. (Feature-length film only.)*

### It's Elementary

Let's say that you don't believe in the gay lifestyle and you feel that this is against your religion and it's not a good thing—at least this way you can teach what you believe to your child. You live a day-to-day life with your child and forget to talk and when they do come home with questions, it opens the dialogue. Even if you are against the lifestyle it still needs to be there. It still needs to be addressed. —*Second-grade parent, Hawthorne Elementary School, Madison, Wisconsin. (Feature-length film only.)*

### It's Elementary

## WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

### ANSWERING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

This exercise will help participants:

- Explore their own comfort level in relation to conversations about LGBT people.
- Learn from their peers.
- Practice language with which they feel comfortable.



#### Facilitator Note

This can be done with one facilitator but is easier to facilitate with two people so that one person can sort through the cards while the other starts facilitating a conversation.

**Audience:** Educators, parents, guardians (ideally 30 people or less).

**Materials:** Index cards and writing utensils.

**Time Needed:** 20-35 minutes after showing the film.

#### Instructions:

- Hand out index cards.
- After participants have had some time to discuss the film, invite them to think about the kinds of questions or statements that children made in the film. Ask them to think about a question that they would be nervous about answering and have them write the question on their index cards. Depending on the audience, you may want to focus more on questions that students might ask teachers or questions that children might ask parents or guardians.
- Collect the cards as people finish them. Begin sorting them into different categories that they might fall into, such as: questions about same-sex parents, what words such as gay and lesbian mean, whether a specific person is gay or lesbian, religious beliefs, how babies are born.
- Tell the group that you are unlikely to be able to address each card but that you will try and address the main categories reflected in the cards.
- Read a card aloud and ask the group to brainstorm different ways to respond to the question. Ask the group to identify the pros and cons of different responses. Emphasize that there is no one right way to respond to any given question. Refer when possible to statements made by children in the film. Some scenes that might be relevant include:
  - » An eighth-grade teacher stops a student who used the word faggot.
  - » A fourth-grade teacher stops a lesson to define what the word “gay” actually means.
  - » Students in first- and second-grade classrooms talk about the lesbian and gay people they know in their lives, including a girl who has two mothers.
- When you have finished this activity, ask the group to reflect on what strategies or language they have learned from doing this exercise.



#### Facilitator Note

The most important part of this exercise is to give people a chance to practice answering questions. Do not feel that you have to have them come up with any kind of consensus on how to respond to any question. Allow for the variety of comfort levels that are likely to be represented in the room. Some people will use simple answers while others will want to ask questions to generate deeper conversation. By asking what the pros and cons are to each response, the benefits and challenges of each response will be made clear to the group.

# Guest Speakers: Student Questions

Alternative: Use **It's Elementary** cards with the questions that were asked of the Community United Against Violence (CUAV) panelists in the middle school class. Ask each person to pull a card out of the bag. Have them read their card aloud and discuss the answers to the questions. Help participants feel comfortable being able to answer the questions in an age-appropriate and respectful way.



If you are a gay man do you have to act like a woman, because I heard that gay men keep a clean house?



How do your parents feel about you being lesbian or gay?



Is it true that gay men and lesbian women dress in tight leather, show their booty and stuff to attract men and women?



When you realized you were gay did you feel confused or like you wanted to kill yourself?



If you have kids how old would you want them to be before you tell them you are gay?



If your kids say when they grow up that they want to be gay like you what would you say?



How do you guys do it?



How do you find out if another person is gay or lesbian?



Has anyone ever said, "I don't want to be your friend anymore" when you told them you were gay? Or just laughed and then you never saw them again?



Is it true that if you have short hair it means you are a lesbian? Do a lot of dykes have short hair?



Is there a reason why you are gay? Is it because something happened to you when you were a child?



If you had the choice to start all over and be straight would you rather be straight instead of being gay?



Do you get offended when people call you names?



PHOTOCOPY BEFORE CUTTING



# 3

## **PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**



## Voices Of Change

### Raimol Cortado

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#### **From *It's Elementary***

"Most of the time I put gays and lesbians down. I know it's not right, but I do it anyway. I say things like, "gay men molest children." But that's not true. Most of the time I don't even know what I'm saying. I say it all out of ignorance. I should find out what's true first, before even saying anything about gays and lesbians."

#### **From *It's STILL Elementary***

"That was the first time that I ever heard stories about gay people in class. To be honest, I think I had a lot of stereotypes towards gay people. That particular lesson helped me understand more. I remember the different people that came. It was really touching for everybody 'cause we were talking about it at lunchtime. It touched me...the struggles they went through being labeled and stuff. I think it broke through a lot of barriers. Kinda helped me to understand other people more."

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**Raimol Cortado, an eighth-grader in *It's Elementary*. In *It's STILL Elementary*, he's a father of two and a caseworker at the Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center in San Francisco, where he works with middle school students and intervenes in their name-calling.**

Educators at all levels need support and resources as they try to be attentive and responsive to many dimensions of student diversity. Just as we now understand that there are significant problems with conceptualizing the curriculum in ways that are excessively standardized and undifferentiated, we understand that students vary in significant ways that must be taken into account in designing curriculum and pedagogical approaches. There is also increasing recognition that students' sense of acceptance and safety in schools has a dramatic impact on both their academic achievement and their ability to become competent, confident adults. Although teachers often feel overwhelmed with what they are asked to "cover" in the curriculum, all this teaching takes place in a social context, and ***It's Elementary*** can help all teachers be more aware of the importance of both what they teach and how they teach. The lessons students learn—about who belongs and who is of value—will stay with them their whole lives.

## Preparing Teachers To Become Better Educators

While most teacher education programs address issues of race, gender, and class, few have specific coursework devoted to issues of sexual orientation. Faculty and students in pre-service teacher education courses, then, must explicitly facilitate and insist upon the integration of LGBT issues in the pre-service teacher curriculum.

The ability to manage discussion about uncomfortable or unknown issues is nurtured through modeling. A student teacher who wonders how the widely publicized 1998 murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard has anything to do with third-graders can be encouraged to think about how silence about LGBT people at the elementary school level contributes to the ignorance and intolerance that can lead to rationalized acts of violence against LGBT people. Students can also learn to make bridges between heterosexism and other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, ageism and discrimination based on religion or disability. The more that issues of homophobia can be linked to broader issues, the less likely it becomes that the topic will be marginalized or dismissed as inappropriate or irrelevant. Applying a model adapted from Mara Sapon-Shevin's book *Because We Can Change the World* (1999) we might propose three goals for teachers regarding teaching for social justice.



### Intervention Strategy

Rather than policies called "Zero Tolerance,"

which are often punitive in nature, we propose a policy of "Zero Indifference," meaning that teachers will not ignore inappropriate, hurtful behavior.



### In This Guide

Group exercises and discussion activities for educators, see pages 19–24.



### From The Film

"I think that I'm a better teacher now because I know that in the

classroom I have to be here for all of my students. I have to affirm who they are. And for my children who are children of gay or lesbian families, I need to create an environment in which they feel comfortable to come in and talk about, 'Last night we went out for pizza with my two moms,' or 'my dad, my two dads and I, we went out swimming,' because I know what it's like not to be affirmed in a classroom, because I was not as a child."—  
*Thelma Delgado, in It's Elementary*

**Knowledge.** What is the core knowledge in this area for future teachers? At minimum, they need to know correct terminology. What is the appropriate context for use of the word queer? What do the words lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender mean? Teachers also need to know foundational information about LGBT people living in society, including demographic facts about the number of people who identify as LGBT, the number of children in their school who have LGBT parents, and information about the invisibility or visibility of LGBT people (military policies and discrimination laws for example). Teachers need accurate information about AIDS, not because it is a "gay disease," but because homophobia and misinformation often surface during discussions of the disease. Teachers need knowledge about the origin, transmission and prevention of AIDS to share with students when appropriate. Because there are many competing claims about the "truth" about sexual orientation, faculty must help students understand the ways in which personal and political agendas become manifest in this area, and help develop the skills of critical listening and thinking.

**Courage.** A goal for future teachers is that they understand the importance of preventing and confronting homophobia, and that they have the courage to act when they witness hurtful acts or hear misinformation. We want to position our teachers to take a powerful stand against existing norms and entrenched assumptions that are linked to the oppression of people for any reason, including sexual identity. While they may lack the confidence in their own ability to "do it right," we hope that they will nonetheless have the courage to seize teachable moments. Rather than policies called "Zero Tolerance," which are often punitive in nature, we propose a policy of "Zero Indifference," meaning that teachers will not ignore inappropriate, hurtful behavior. They will know that this is important work worth doing, even if they cannot predict the outcome of a tense discussion or be assured that it will go smoothly.

**Skills.** When teachers witness any act of intolerance, they need to be prepared to skillfully respond. A pre-service teacher who states, "What would I say if a student says 'so and so is gay,' or 'so and so's father is gay?' I'm not going to get into it because I could upset the parents," can be provided with specific strategies for responding to comments and questions from students. Teachers need to be comfortable fostering a critical and caring classroom culture, helping students identify their own assumptions, broadening their horizons by asking questions, stimulating respectful dialogue about issues and experiences that lie beyond students' immediate experiences, and guiding students to consider the voices of those who have been silenced. Eradicating homophobia in schools requires that teachers have skills to confront both subtle and explicit acts of intolerance.

***It's Elementary* can be a very useful tool to address these three goals:**

**Knowledge:** What did you learn from watching the film? What are the effects of the knowledge gaps you saw in the film? What are your own knowledge gaps and how will you fill them in to become better teachers?

**Courage:** Who in the film displayed courage? The administrator who chooses to bring the "Love Makes a Family" exhibit to her school despite parental protest? The little girl who writes a story about her two moms for a Mother's Day competition? The young lesbian woman who comes to talk to the middle-school students? The first- and second-grade teacher who questions her own culture's assumptions about being inclusive? When have you displayed that kind of courage? What would it take to help you become more courageous?

**Skills:** What skills did you observe in the film related to responding to misinformation, discrimination or prejudice? How did administrators and teachers make decisions about curriculum and pedagogy in order to address students' understanding and acceptance? What skills do you need to develop in order to do this work more effectively?

**Making schools safe learning environments for all students is the essential goal of all educators; students cannot learn if they feel frightened or excluded. We cannot afford to lose the energy, contributions or potential of any student (or teacher), and must commit ourselves to making schools productive learning environments for all people.**



**From The Film**

"It's just that as kids, we hear all these different things from different

places, people telling us different things. And school needs to give all the facts, so we can decide on our own what to think and, you know, what to do." —*Seventh-grade student*

# Considerations For Educational Practitioners

***It's Elementary*** has been used with both pre-service and in-service teachers as well as administrators, school counselors and other related education professionals. Teacher education and professional development programs are intended to prepare teachers to be caring and effective educators for the children and parents within the school community. Making sure that all children and their families feel welcome touches every aspect of teacher education, including curriculum development, inclusive pedagogy, family-school relationships and communication, and the creation of a socially just future for all people. Following are some topics the film can help illuminate.

**Age-Appropriate Curriculum.** One of the issues that often comes up for teachers relative to talking/teaching about issues of homosexuality is the issue of age appropriateness. It may be difficult to imagine how one might broach this topic with very young children.

**Before viewing the film:** Ask what you think is appropriate for young children to know and understand about homosexuality, LGBT-headed families, etc. What did you know about this area when you were young and where did you learn it?

**After viewing the film:** How did what you see confirm or challenge your notions of what is possible and appropriate with young children? Now that you have seen the film, what do you think you would be able to talk about or teach to young children?

**Using The Words.** Even the youngest children have frequently heard the words gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender used negatively—often without knowing what they mean. Many adults have grown up with these words being taboo and will have a hard time using the words. It is critical that teachers learn to use them in a neutral and respectful way. Role model respectful use of these words by saying them from time to time to help students understand and become more comfortable with them. Convey in your approach that these are not “bad” words, and that they describe human beings in the community. Removing the negative connotation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender is an important step towards preventing the use of these words as slurs and bias-based bullying. If you are not comfortable saying or explaining the words, practice with a colleague.

**Being Aware and Responding.** One of the biggest challenges teachers face in the classroom is responding to students’ bullying, teasing or harassing comments about other students. One of the obstacles to developing thoughtful responses is that often teachers do not see or hear these remarks; students have often learned to be extremely covert and to engage in negative interpersonal behavior out of the teacher’s purview. At one point in the film,



## In This Guide

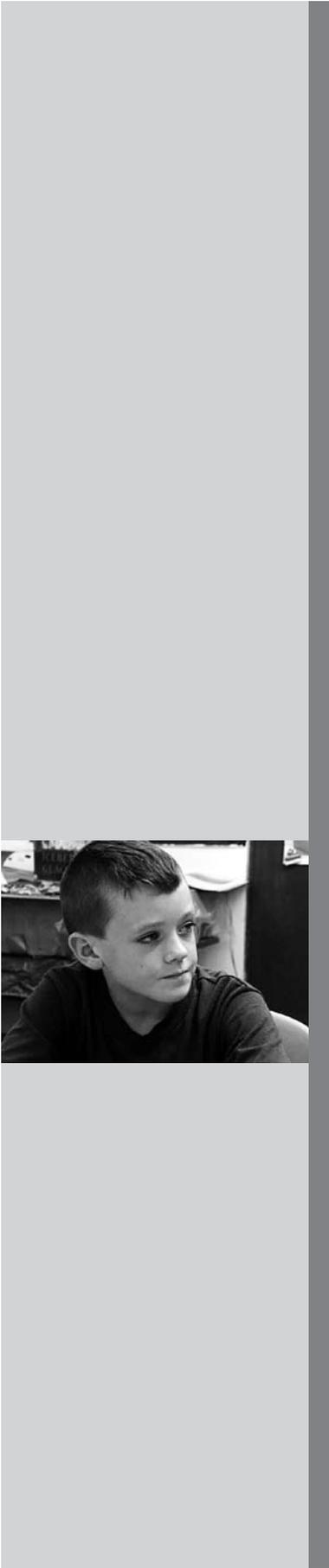
For age appropriate definitions please see the Vocabulary Guide in the Appendix on page 121.

a young girl comments, “No offense” (as she indicates the teacher sitting next to her), “but it’s amazing what teachers do not notice.” Discuss with teachers what things they think they notice and, if possible, what things they do not notice or do not respond to. What do they feel keeps them from noticing? What classroom practices or structures would need to be in place for teachers to be more aware? Suggestions might include morning circle time, journal writing, small group discussion, a confidential problem box, etc.

**Being Proactive vs. Reactive.** In dealing with issues of LGBT-bias and other issues that effect classroom climate and how students treat one another, many teachers inadvertently become *reactive* rather than *proactive*. That is, they formulate extensive rules and procedures relating to what they will do when/if students behave inappropriately. Proactive strategies, which can pre-empt many of the negative behaviors, refer to those things a teacher might do at the beginning of the year (and periodically throughout) that set the tone, the rules and the procedures for how students should treat one another in the classroom. This might include issues of rule making, generation of classroom norms, implementation of specific classroom structures as well as specific discussions about issues of teasing, name-calling, dignity, respect, and related topics.

Have teachers generate examples of interpersonal social behaviors (both positive and negative) and then discuss ways of reacting after the fact as well as ways of implementing strategies to make that behavior either more likely (like to see this happen) or less likely (would like to see less of this). You can create a chart like the one below.

BEHAVIOR	REACTIVE STRATEGIES	PROACTIVE STRATEGIES
Example: Teasing (want to see less)	Reprimands, loss of privileges	Discussions of how we talk to others respectfully; word wall that includes “stereotypes,” “dignity,” “respect,” etc.; reading books about characters who are teased; using music that relates to how we use language. Make sure to address anti-gay bias and incorporate LGBT-inclusive curriculum.
Example: Compliments (want to hear more)	Praising and noticing those who say nice things	Modeling compliments; brainstorming nice things to say to one another; daily appreciation circle (say something nice to the person to your left); thank you notes to class members who have helped you.



**Actively Challenging Bias.** Learning to actively challenge the mistreatment of others is a vital skill in building a more socially just society. Ask the following:

- Think of a time when you tried to challenge or interrupt some form of mistreatment you heard or saw (a sexist remark, a homophobic joke, etc.).
- Think of a time when you didn't challenge or try to interrupt some form of mistreatment.
- If you **did** challenge, what allowed you to do this? (knowledge, position of power, strong feelings, personal connection to the issue?)
- If you **didn't** challenge the mistreatment, what got in your way? (fear; didn't know what to say; didn't realize it had happened; no power; close relationship that made it feel impossible?)
- What do you need to learn (knowledge) or practice (skills) in order to be a better ally around LGBT issues?

Have students think about the first two questions individually (about five minutes of quiet time) and then discuss in pairs. Make sure to state that we have all attempted to challenge mistreatment and there are times we all have missed the opportunity or let it go by, and that we can learn from both kinds of stories. After partners have shared, make a chart with students about questions three and four. Discuss question five as a large group.

**Modeling Appropriate Integration of LGBT Issues.** Think about all the places within the teacher education curriculum that LGBT issues can be addressed. In courses about the history of education, include the history of LGBT people during discussions of other oppressed groups and civil rights' struggles. Include LGBT people within all discussions of multicultural education or diversity in education, particularly when talking about the multiple identities all children bring to their educational experience. Classes on school climate, classroom environments and social relationships in the classroom should address the critical importance of making all children and their families safe and welcomed in schools.

**Incorporating LGBT-Inclusive Content Across Curriculum.** Many educators struggle with where in the curriculum they can talk about issues of homosexuality, heterosexism and homophobia, LGBT people and their rights, etc. It maybe very useful to brainstorm all the places/ways this issue can be introduced/discussed that will not feel like an "add-on" to the curriculum or the school day, i.e. avoiding the "Now we are going to talk about homosexuality" conversation as something separate from what is usually done. Some possibilities that generally emerge include the following (but once participants are encouraged to think outside the box, the ideas are generally expansive):

- As part of ongoing reading programs include children's books or young adult fiction that deal with different types of families, discrimination, homophobia, etc. These are available at many different reading and comprehension levels.
- As part of regular current events discussions bring in and discuss news articles about LGBT people, LGBT rights, gay bashing, debates about marriage rights, etc.
- As part of any discussion about media literacy encourage students to write down sexist and heterosexist comments they see/hear in comedy shows, dramas, commercials, etc. Discuss these in class.
- Ask students to listen for comments about gender and sexuality they hear on the playground, on the bus, in public, etc., and to bring these back to class for discussion: What did you hear? What did you think? How did you feel? Did you respond?
- Be attentive to your own language and the examples you give and the stories you tell. Challenge the dominant paradigm by using spelling sentences and math problems that feature a variety of families, for example:
  - » Michael and Fred are making cookies for their daughter's school party. They want each student to have two cookies and want leftovers. If there are 27 students in the class, how many dozen cookies should they bake?
  - » A dictation sentence written on the board to be checked for grammar: *olivia was looking forward to the gay pride parade because she and her mothers maya and kim were going to ride on a float.*



## Voices Of Change

### Randi B. Wolfe, Ph.D.

Director of Workforce Development at Los Angeles Universal Preschool  
Los Angeles, California

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As a professor in early childhood education, one of my primary goals was to encourage and empower students to think about issues of bias and mistreatment. Although issues related to race, gender, culture or socio-economic class are treated as appropriate curricular topics, gay oppression is rarely recognized as equally relevant and important. That lack of recognition is not only based on unawareness, but resistance to approach controversial or “political” issues within the framework of teacher preparation.

If pre-service teachers are to be capably prepared to meet the challenges associated with classroom and community diversity, teacher educators have a responsibility to incorporate such issues in teacher preparation coursework, despite the controversial overtones of such issues. Primary among these issues is that of considering and responding appropriately to children of LGBT parents. Given the estimated millions of children in the United States currently being raised by LGBT parents, early childhood classroom teachers will come face to face with these issues sooner or later. In the spirit of inclusion and acceptance of diversity, teachers have a responsibility to the children of LGBT parents as well as other children to convey attitudes of acceptance of differences, and respect for all people.

With these ideas in mind, I used *It's Elementary* in my early childhood classes at the large midwestern state university where I taught for nine years. More than 400 undergraduate and graduate students viewed the film and engaged in thought-provoking and important discussions. The film served as an excellent vehicle through which to:

- **Raise important questions:** “How do we, as teachers, respect the children in our classrooms even if we don’t accept or agree with their parents’ ideas or choices?”
- **Address misguided assumptions:** “Children in the midwest aren’t aware of gay issues; the early elementary grades are too soon to introduce such concepts.”
- **Challenge erroneous stereotypes:** “Being gay is about sex—and we shouldn’t be talking about sex with young children.”

*It's Elementary* is a gift to both teacher educators and pre-service teachers. Regardless of the kind of school or community in which they work, students who have the opportunity to view the film and consider the ideas presented will benefit tremendously from having their minds and hearts opened to the issues surrounding gay oppression and the pressures faced by the children of LGBT parents.

## Voices Of Change

### Kevin K. Kumashiro, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, University of Illinois-Chicago  
Director, Center for Anti-Oppressive Education  
Chicago, Illinois

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I have had the opportunity to teach at various stages of pre-service teacher education, from introductory-level courses in certification programs, to seminars for student teachers, to in-service professional development workshops for veteran teachers. Some educators come to these courses or workshops already committed to addressing bias based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression, and therefore are looking for concrete, age-appropriate ways to do this. Others come with concerns about resistance and backlash, and are questioning whether schools should be trying to teach about LGBT people and issues at all. For both audiences, I have found *It's Elementary* to be an important and useful resource because it not only shows real teachers teaching about LGBT people and about anti-LGBT bias, but also troubles the notion that schools should or even can stay neutral.

Most often I show an early clip from the film in which students of a fourth-grade classroom are listing everything they think of when they hear the words “gay” or “lesbian” and then reflecting on where they learn such messages. As we discuss the film clip, we reflect on the fact that even very young students come to school already having learned much information and misinformation about LGBT people, and continue to learn about LGBT people and issues, especially in indirect ways, such as when schools are silent on these issues. The notion that silence can be instructive echoes the issues raised in an activity I often facilitate just prior to showing the clip. (This activity is described in more detail in my book, *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning toward Social Justice, 2004*.) In this activity we brainstorm the many instances when sexual orientation or gender identity comes up in schools, and then analyze the possible messages that students may be learning either from those instances or from the reaction and/or inaction of schools and school employees to bias.

The activity and the film clip push us to think about how students learn and what schools teach about LGBT people, often without our intending for such teaching and learning to occur. Together they provoke discussion on the power of hidden curriculum and how students learn quite harmful lessons when we try to avoid teaching about difference and injustice. Strategizing ways for educators to address bias in the face of resistance—using the film—we can find innovative ways to expose the complexity of the problem and discover the possibilities of anti-oppressive change.



## Voices Of Change

### Lori Langer de Ramirez, Ed.D.

Chair, ESL and World Language Department, Herricks Public Schools  
New Hyde Park, New York

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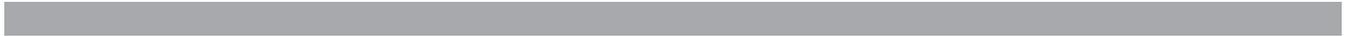


In teaching my course, “Teaching and Learning in the Multicultural Classroom” at Teachers College, Columbia University for over 20 semesters, I was faced with the challenge of how to include everyone in the crucial discussion regarding multiculturalism. As I began developing the first incarnation of my syllabus, I consulted several of the leading college textbooks on the topic of multicultural education. Dividing the course into weeks, I attempted to address one “issue” or one “-ism” per week. As I quickly began running out of weeks, but not topics, I realized that one issue was left out of many of the texts—and thus potentially my course—that of sexual orientation and heterosexism. It was often subsumed under the heading of gender identity and thus made to share space in the textbooks and classroom time. This important topic seemed to be given short shrift. I wasn’t comfortable doing the same in my course.

As a teacher “in the trenches,” I have witnessed the ruthless adolescent teasing that consistently takes place in the halls of my school—I would offer in every school throughout the country. I heard kids calling friends and foe alike “fag” or simply screaming out, “UCH! That’s SO gay!” to describe anything negative. I tried to stop kids by humanizing the issue. I would say, “Hey, my best friend is gay and your comments hurt my feelings.” Kids would inevitably put their heads down, look remorseful, apologize and walk away, only to repeat the slur a few feet down the hall. Aside from a lack of success, I was tired of being on a solitary crusade.

I saw a golden opportunity to talk to my colleagues at school and my students at grad school after viewing *It’s Elementary*. This film brought the topics of sexual orientation, homophobia and gay families into schools in a non-threatening way. After viewing the film my colleagues and students seemed primed like never before to discuss these issues in their own teaching contexts. They felt freer to share incidents that occurred in their own schools and work through their own barriers about addressing homophobia. Students were inspired to establish Gay–Straight Alliances (GSA) at their schools. Many recommended the film to their professional development directors and principals. *It’s Elementary* gives educators an effective vehicle through which to discuss gay issues in schools. It opens the door to discussion and action.

# NOTES:



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# 4

## **K-8 CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION**



## Voices Of Change

### Brandon Rice

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#### **From *It's Elementary***

"People say that I act like a girl and sometimes I sometimes do."

"Beause you're kind of artistic, and dance a lot, and do stuff?"

"Yeah, like that."



#### **From *It's STILL Elementary***

"I was really scared of coming out at an early age. I did have some support at school, you know, from teachers or friends, but, I still felt like I was being targeted because I was different in the way that I talk, dress, you know, walk. But I remember it was soothing to hear teachers and faculty at school letting me know that it's OK. Just to know that I had that support and to hear from other people at my school that it was OK, I think it really lifted a burden off my shoulders."

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**Brandon Rice, in fifth-grade in *It's Elementary*; in *It's STILL Elementary* a student at Madison Area Technical College, Madison, Wisconsin and head of the Gay-Straight Alliance.**

# Talking About LGBT Issues In School: Where To Begin

Before you begin integrating LGBT lessons and content into daily teaching or school-wide programming, it is helpful to do some preliminary planning and outreach. Here are some suggestions for consideration before you embark upon your work.

**Find allies.** Think about who else in your school community might be interested in consciously creating ways to be inclusive of diverse families and students. There is much to be gained by learning from and supporting one another. Consider meeting regularly. You might also want to explore how other schools in your district are working on these issues. Finding ways to collaborate and share knowledge and experience can be very valuable.

**Connect with your school's mission, its priorities and your district or state academic standards.** Some school mission statements are very broad and address the goals of having students perform successfully academically, emotionally, physically and socially. Others directly address diversity with language such as: "to create a safe and supportive environment" and "to respect individual differences and cultures." Be prepared to connect your efforts to your school's specific mission and local or state learning standards.

**Clarify what you want to do and why.** It may help to draft your own mission statement and goals. Think about how your efforts will create a better school. How will you be helping students? Why is this important? Answering these questions will help you answer questions that might arise from colleagues, parents or students. Be prepared to help others understand the importance of these issues. Often it is powerful to relay personal stories of students who have been helped or harmed by the way sexual orientation has been addressed in schools.

**Let your administration know what you are doing.** It is extremely important to involve your administration in efforts to be LGBT-inclusive. If you decide to use some of the lesson plans in this guide, have a conversation with your administrator about it first. Include them in planning meetings. Make sure they are prepared to answer questions or concerns that might arise. Be willing to help your administrator develop the language to address these issues. Suggest a screening of *It's Elementary* for all school staff as a way to explore the approach your school will take to incorporate LGBT-inclusive lesson plans. Have some patience for the process of bringing others on board. There is a benefit to moving forward slowly in order to have the support of your administration and colleagues.



## It's True

Having a harassment policy in place that specifically mentions sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is associated with more students feeling safe (95% vs. 83%) and reporting less harassment or fewer negative remarks at their school.

*From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers, Harris Interactive, 2005*



### Teaching Tip

Gather local stories and data; if your school has participated in wellness or climate surveys, there may have been items about bullying. If not, consider surveying or interviewing teachers or giving students writing assignments about bullying to generate a local “baseline” you can use to explain the problem and help others understand the necessity of this work.



### From The Community

“Our experience is that the teachers in our church

want to make a safe space for their students to be who they are and to be respectful of others. ***It’s Elementary*** demonstrates how thoughtful teachers can address a topic that is controversial but also fundamental for the creation of a welcoming classroom.” —*Jan Resseger, Minister for Public Education and Witness, United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries*

**Discuss how to talk about these lessons with parents.** Use a format that is similar to how you notify parents about other topics. Some schools send parents a letter once or twice a year to let them know about topics that will be covered in the classroom. Some schools have an open house or parent nights to discuss specific topics. Consider how these lesson plans are related to existing school initiatives and curriculum such as anti-bullying initiatives, social and emotional learning, family diversity curriculum or social studies curricula. Be prepared to present the lessons in these contexts.

## Simple Ways To Incorporate LGBT-Inclusive Material Across The Curriculum

Talking about LGBT people in school does not always have to be done as part of an extended lesson plan. There are many opportunities to integrate LGBT content in existing curriculum. By doing this, educators are letting students know that LGBT people are valued and can be talked about without being the focus of a lesson or a problem with name-calling or harassment. Students who have LGBT relatives and students who are struggling with their own sexual orientation are likely to feel affirmed if they hear LGBT people talked about in a matter-of-fact way. It is a reminder to all students that LGBT people are present in all walks of life and that LGBT people deserve respect.

### LANGUAGE ARTS

There are several books on family diversity, non-traditional gender roles, and books that highlight ways to handle bullying and name-calling. Many of the books work well with individual curriculum units. Consider using some of these books as part of your reading program; use some for read alouds, have others available for a student’s individual reading. These books can lead to rich class discussions about families, and respecting and understanding differences. Even picture books, although written for an early reading level, can be used with older students as a focal point for discussion.

Books also make excellent sources for writing topics to use in your writing projects. Have students write about their own families and then expand the topic to include writing about families different from their own. Depending on the age group, suggest writing personal short essays, fiction stories or research papers on LGBT authors. When you list names for biography writing be sure to include some famous LGBT people.

Use everyday problems all the students face for writing prompts such as:

When I hear someone say, “That’s so gay” or “She’s a dyke”:

- » I can be an ally to my classmates by...
- » I can help create a caring classroom by...

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Be sure that your classroom social studies books include the stories of famous LGBT people such as Barbara Jordan or Harvey Milk. Include men and women who have excelled in nontraditional realms such as the dancers Rudolf Nureyev and Alvin Ailey; the scientist Rachel Carson; or the first African-American woman pilot, Bessie Coleman.

It is also important that you help your students explore more than just the lives of a few famous LGBT people. When you are talking about discrimination, include discrimination against LGBT people. When you talk about the civil rights movement, include Bayard Rustin, a key strategist who worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. You can also include significant moments in LGBT civil rights history such as the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City or the election of Harvey Milk as one of the first openly gay politicians. When you talk about the struggles individuals overcome to achieve great success, include a discussion about the burden our society puts on LGBT people. If you post articles on bulletin boards about current events, include articles with LGBT content or ones that highlight LGBT people in the news or in history.

## MATH AND SCIENCE

Read through your word problems and be sure that they reflect all kinds of families and not just families with a traditional mom and dad. Examples can be as simple as: *Joshua and his moms went apple picking. Joshua picked 27 apples and his moms picked 42 apples. How many apples did they have all together? Or, Keisha went to the grocery store with her dads. Their bill was \$54.67. Keisha's parents gave the cashier \$60.00. How much change did her dads get back?*

In addition, you can highlight famous scientists who were LGBT (such as Sir Francis Bacon, Sonya Kovalevsky, Florence Nightingale, and Alan Turing). In older grades, analyze the data in public opinions surveys about LGBT people, the search for a "gay gene," the nature/nurture debate, and the way science is used in debates involving same sex marriage rights.

## MUSIC, ART, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND LIBRARY

Encourage the teachers of these special subjects to participate in discussions with colleagues about providing safe, inclusive learning environments for all children. Make resources available to these teachers. Special subject teachers see all the students in a school and can be important in providing continuity to this work.

### Music and Art

Encourage all children's artistic or musical abilities. Be prepared for teachable moments such as when one student says to another, "Oh, pink is a girl's color,



### In This Guide

You will find Famous LGBT People Cards that include a short description of their accomplishments on pages 94–96.



### Teaching Note

The Stonewall Riots started in response to police raids on LGBT bars in New York City, during the summer of 1969. The confrontations between police officers and demonstrators from the Stonewall Inn became an important part of LGBT history. These protests sparked a new wave of activism.

why are you using THAT?" or "Chorus is for girls." Read books to your students such as *The Art Lesson* (1989) by Tomie dePaola or *Dance! with Bill T. Jones* (1998) by Susan Kuklin. Point out the contributions LGBT artists and musicians have made. Highlight famous dancers or musicians such as Leonard Bernstein, or Katherine Lee Bates, author of "America the Beautiful." Include famous artists such as pop artist Andy Warhol, artist/inventor Leonardo da Vinci and photographer Annie Leibovitz and make reference to this aspect of their identity.

With older students, highlight the work of a number of artists who are diverse in terms of their race, gender and sexual orientation. Show examples of the work of a few who have distinctive styles—perhaps including Jacob Lawrence, Frida Kahlo and Andy Warhol. Ask students to think about how they might represent something about their own identity on paper. Define identity broadly to include race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, class, where they live and their values. Ask them to draw a picture in their own distinctive style that represents something about who they are.

### **Physical Education**

Provide an inclusive classroom environment by talking about physical differences and abilities. Provide opportunities for both boys and girls to participate in all activities. Do not let comments slide by such as "you throw like a girl;" "girls aren't as strong as boys;" or "a boy is a sissy if he likes to dance." Be prepared with comments and constructive responses. Initiate discussions to break down gender stereotypes or discuss gender limitations. Make sure to offer all activities to both boys and girls such as moving equipment and helping to clean up after activities.

### **Library**

Books provide an important mirror for children to see themselves reflected in the world around them. At the same time they provide a window into the lives of others, and expand students' personal experience. Diversify the books available in your library. Include books with different kinds of families and with cultural, racial, economic and ethnic diversity. Also include books that show a wide range of activities, emotions and achievements for boys and girls. Create displays of the books in the library that feature different kinds of families.

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### **Social and Emotional Lessons**

This is a wonderful time to include children's experiences with LGBT issues. When you teach about name-calling, ask if they have heard "lesbian or gay" used as an insult. Talk about what it really means and then teach them how to use their words to stop such name-calling. Teach them how to be allies for everyone. When you talk about stereotypes, include stereotypes about LGBT people.



# Responding To Student Questions

When audiences view *It's Elementary*, they often remark on the ease with which elementary and middle school students in the film discuss topics related to LGBT people. Hearing these conversations has helped many school personnel become more confident in their ability to cultivate these types of respectful conversations with their own students.

This section provides some examples of concrete answers to questions students might ask. Each question is related to an issue brought up by students in the film. Each question is also accompanied by a “teachable moment connection” with a suggestion of ways to expand the conversation started by a student question or comment.

There are many ways to respond to any given comment or question from a student. Factors such as the place that a comment is made, the perceived intent of a comment, the age of the student, and the relationship between an educator and a student will influence the content of responses. Paying attention to the following tips will help you frame your response based on each unique situation.

## **Sometimes asking a question is the best way to respond.**

This allows you to find out what a student is really asking or what was meant by a comment. For example, a student might say that a classmate’s two mothers are weird. Maybe she is saying that because she does not know that someone can have two moms or maybe she is saying it for another reason. Maybe she is unfamiliar with the foods the family eats and therefore thinks they are weird. By asking the student why he or she thinks the mothers are weird you can make sure you are addressing the actual issue at hand.

**Do not assume ill intent.** If a student uses the phrase “That’s so gay” or says that something is gay in a way that does not target an individual, they may be repeating language that they have heard from other people and do not mean to be hurtful. When you explain that this language is hurtful, let the student know you understand the comment was probably not intended to hurt anyone but it should not be used again.

**Be a positive role model.** If a comment or question is asked in front of a group, think about how your response will sound to a student who has two fathers, a student who has a lesbian aunt, or a student who may be unsure of his or her own identity. It is important that these students hear something from you that reassures them that they and their families are respected. Remember that you probably do not know which students fall into all of these categories.

**Do not get hung up on perfection.** In her book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (2003) Beverly Daniel Tatum wrote, “A sincere, though imperfect, attempt to interrupt the oppression of others is usually better than no attempt at all.” Give yourself permission to stumble a



## **Teaching Tip**

Keep in mind that your answer will depend on the cognitive development of each child. You will want to respond to students in an age-appropriate way.



### In This Guide

You will find a handout for responding to “That’s so gay” on page 54.

few times as you find the right words. It is also OK to tell students that you do not know the answer to something or need time to think about your answer and that you will get back to them.

**Acknowledge honest comments and questions in a positive way.** Sometimes students might feel embarrassed to ask a certain question or state an opinion. In the film, a student asks if women can make their own sperm. This could have been an embarrassing moment but the teacher answered the question in a matter-of-fact way that did not appear to embarrass the student. Simply saying, “I’m really glad you asked that question” or “I think a lot of people have that question” can help put a student at ease. A straightforward reply to a fifth grader might be: “No. Women can make eggs but they can’t make sperm.”

**Look for opportunities to educate.** In some situations you may only have time to respond to a comment or a question with a simple statement. The examples below provide some simple responses. Look for those moments when you can have more in-depth conversations that relate to academic content or social and emotional learning. The teachable moment connections in the following examples provide some models for how to do that.

## That's A Good Question

**Q: “My brother’s friend called him a faggot. What does that mean?”**

**A:** It sounds like your brother’s friend was using the word “faggot” as a put-down. Sometimes the word is used as a put-down of gay people and sometimes it is used when someone is angry or wants to be mean. A lot of times when people use that word they don’t actually mean that the person they are talking about is gay. Mostly it’s a word that shouldn’t be used because it hurts people’s feelings.



### Teachable Moment

In the film, a fifth-grade teacher at Hawthorne Elementary in Wisconsin engaged students in this kind of discussion. The discussion created an atmosphere where students talked about being teased because of not fitting gender, ethnic or body size stereotypes. Consider having a conversation about put-downs and how they make people feel. This can be tied to a class conversation about making a welcoming classroom. See the lesson plan, *Developing Empathy and Being an Ally*, on page 80 in this guide for more ideas.

**Q: “What does the word ‘gay’ mean?”**

**A:** The word gay is used to describe people who fall in love with someone of the same gender. So it can be used to describe two men or two women who are in a romantic relationship.



**Teachable Moment**

This question might be asked in many different ways. In one fourth-grade classroom highlighted in the film it became clear that some of the students were confused about what gay meant. One student equated being gay to interracial marriages. In this case, a simple answer like the one given above is appropriate. If the question is asked because the word gay has been used as a put-down then it would also be useful to have a longer conversation about the effect of put-downs and how they make others feel. Depending on the age and the context of the conversation, consider also defining the word lesbian.

**Q: “A real family is made up of a mother, a father and children.”**

**A:** Many families do have a mother, a father and children but there are all different kinds of families. Some have just one parent, some have two dads or two moms. Some families include a grandparent or foster parents. The most important thing about a family is that the people in the family love and care for each other.



**Teachable Moment**

This is a great opportunity to talk about families in general and explore the many different family structures that exist today. Ask students to brainstorm all kinds of families that they know about. Ask them to see how many different types of families they can come up with. You may also read a book that reflects different examples of families.

**Q: “When my grandfather visited my family he said he didn’t like that we were talking about gay and lesbian people in school. He said it’s not right.”**

**A:** It’s true that some people don’t think that schools should talk about gay and lesbian people. I respect that your grandfather has a different opinion than many of us at this school, but I bet he wouldn’t want you to hurt





someone just because they were gay or lesbian. Am I right? Part of why we talk about it is to correct people's stereotypes and to teach all of us that no matter what we believe we can still treat everyone kindly. I know that in our school we have students who have gay and lesbian parents, aunt, uncles, brothers, sisters and friends. I also know that there are some people at this school who are uncomfortable with gay and lesbian people. I want everyone to feel welcome at this school.



### Teachable Moment

Consider having a conversation about how people can respectfully disagree. This can be tied to a lesson plan related to current events or incidents that may have happened in your classroom earlier in the year.

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### Q: "Can gay and lesbian people get married?"

**A:** Yes, in some countries lesbian and gay people can get married but not in most of the United States. That's a great question because there are many gay and lesbian couples that love each other very much and decide that they want to spend their lives together. Some couples might have a religious marriage ceremony to celebrate their relationship—some religious organizations perform such ceremonies and some do not. Some couples might have a nonreligious ceremony or some might have no ceremony at all. In most states gay and lesbian people cannot be legally married. Whether or not a couple is legally married, they are still a family if they take care of one another the way families do. Some people are working to change the laws so that lesbian and gay people can get married. Others are opposed to changing the laws.



### Teachable Moment

When answering this question it is particularly important to think about the impact of the answer on children who may have gay or lesbian parents. You want to let them know that you think of their family as a family even if their parents are not legally married. Also, if you state categorically that it is illegal for LGBT people to be married, they may fear that their family will be in trouble with the law. Have your class further explore the notion of marriage, consider having upper elementary and middle school students respond to current events about marriage or study historical changes in the way marriage has been perceived in the United States. See the lesson plan, *Dialogue About Current Events*, on page 77 in this guide for more ideas.

**Q: “Do gay men act like girls? Do lesbians act like boys?”**

**A:** Some gay men might act in ways that you may think only girls should act and some lesbians might act in ways that you think that only boys should act. But you can’t tell who is gay or lesbian just by looking at them or what they like to do. There are gay men and lesbians who like to do all kinds of things. There are gay men who are football players, hairdressers, doctors and farmers. There are lesbians who are carpenters, teachers, dancers, lawyers and nurses. Gay and lesbian people can be found in all professions, in all walks of life and among all races. There is not one way to be gay or lesbian just as there is not one way to be male or female.



**Teachable Moment**

This question connects directly to the way gender stereotypes affect all people, not just gay and lesbian people. Society has imposed gender roles that limit what is acceptable to us. We want to strive to broaden our ideas about how people “should” behave by letting students know that there is not a “boy” or “girl” way to act. Students can relate this to the concept of fairness. Lead a discussion with students asking if it is fair when girls are told they cannot do things they love because they are female or boys are told they cannot do things they love because they are male. Ask them how that makes them feel.

**Q: “Are boys who mostly hang out with girls or girls who mostly hang out with boys gay?”**

**A:** Who a person hangs out with does not make them gay or straight. People have all different reasons for liking to hang out with different people. It might be because they like to do the same kinds of things, because they make each other laugh, or because they have similar interests.



**Teachable Moment**

Like the preceding question, this question relates to gender stereotypes and can be used to explore the affect of such stereotypes. Students could also be asked to think about what makes someone a good friend. See the lesson plans, *Stereotypes About LGBT People*, on page 86 in this guide for more ideas.



**Resources Online**

For more information about current same-sex marriage laws: go online to the Human Rights Commission (HRC) website, [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) or visit the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) website, [www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org)

For more information on transgender marriage rights: go online to the NCLR website, [www.nclrights.org](http://www.nclrights.org), or the Transgender Law Center website, [www.TransgenderLawCenter.org](http://www.TransgenderLawCenter.org).



**Q: “My friend said his parents won’t let him visit my house because my mothers are lesbians.”**

**A:** Respond with questions such as: “How did that make you feel?”; “When did your friend tell you that?”; “What did you say?”; “Do you want to talk to your mothers about this?”



**Teachable Moment**

Before responding to this statement it is important to get a sense of what the student is feeling and how the situation has been addressed by his parents and the parents of the other child. In your conversation with this child be sure to affirm his family. You may also want to say that you are sorry that his friend could not come over to visit. It may make sense to have conversation with his mothers about this. In the film, a third-grade student at Public School 87 talked about having this type of situation happen to her. She said she felt OK because she loves her family and because other students were supportive of her family. This is an opportunity to have general classroom discussions about different kinds of families and respecting differences. Your focus will be on creating welcoming learning environments for all your students. This will ensure that both students feel supported, safe and can play with one another at school.

**Q: “Some people believe that being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is a sin.”**

**A:** There are people who hold that belief. Some people belong to churches, synagogues, mosques and temples that accept LGBT people, and some do not. In this school we treat everyone with respect and want to make sure that everyone feels part of our school community. That includes LGBT people and people of all religions.



**Teachable Moment**

Pay attention to who else may have heard this statement. It is disturbing for children with LGBT loved-ones and for those who are LGBT to hear these kinds of statements. It is important to state a positive affirmation of all families. Likewise, the student who made the statement may have received strong negative messages about LGBT people from his or her family. It is important that the statement is responded to matter-of-factly so that the child hears the message of what is being said without feeling that his or her family is being ostracized.

**Q: “I thought that all gay and lesbian people were white.”**

**A:** I’ve heard people say that before. But there are LGBT people of all different races. There are some well-known people of color who are LGBT. Some examples include professional basketball player John Amaechi, Jaqueline Woodson who writes books for children and young adults, Lupe Valdez who has served as the Sheriff of Dallas County, Texas, and actor B.D. Wong who was the voice of General Li Shang in *Mulan*.



**Teachable Moment**

This is the kind of statement that is often best answered with a question such as, “Where did you hear that from?” or “Why do you think that?” As in *It’s Elementary*, a student might respond, “Because that’s what I see on TV.” For older grades this can lead to a discussion of who is represented in the media. You may also want to refer to the section of this guide that includes famous LGBT people on page 94 for more examples of LGBT people of color.



**It’s True**

While fewer children of LGBT parents say they were mistreated by school staff because they had LGBT parents, 23% report being mistreated by other parents and 39% by other students because they had LGBT parents. Likewise, 26% of LGBT parents reported being mistreated by other parents specifically because of they were lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

*Kosciw, J. G. & Diaz, E. M. (2008), New York: GLSEN*

**Q: “How do lesbian and gay people have sex?”**

**A:** Our conversation today is about who people love and who’s important in their lives. One of the myths about LGBT people is that all they think about is sex. However, that’s not true and it’s also not the focus of our conversation today.



**Teachable Moment**

Students might have a lot of reasons for asking this question—perhaps to get a rise out of a teacher or to make classmates laugh. They may also just be curious. It is important to respond in a calm, age-appropriate manner and then move on. Of course your answer would be different in an eighth-grade health class than in a fifth-grade discussion of diverse families. In talking with older students, you might find inspiration in the response of a young adult speaker who addressed this question in an eighth-grade classroom, in the film, “We are not here to talk about sex. But like you might imagine, sex is not about a single act. There’s a lot more involved in it. There are feelings—who the two people are, how people feel about each other, and there are two minds involved.”

# What Do You Say To “That’s So Gay”

## Stop It

- Keep it simple with quick responses. You could say:  
“Remember, we don’t use put-downs in this class.”  
“It’s not OK to say ‘That’s so gay.’”  
“That’s not OK to use that phrase.”  
“What did you mean by that?”  
“Do you know what gay means?”  
“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.”  
“Do you know why it is hurtful?”
- If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you do not, make time later.

## Educate

- If you have been hearing the phrase, “That’s so gay” to mean that something is bad or stupid, take the time during a class meeting or group time to make sure that your students know what gay means and know why it is hurtful.
- Be clear with students that when they use the word “gay” in a negative way they are being disrespectful. Also, be clear that using the phrase, “That’s so gay” is hurtful to other students who may have parents, aunts or uncles, other family members who are gay, or themselves might one day identify as gay.
- In lessons on respect, stereotypes or prejudice include discrimination against lesbian and gay people.

## Be Proactive

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your class and school.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against name-calling and hurtful teasing.
- If you have been hearing the phrase, “That’s so gay” in your class or school, be explicit that rules against name-calling includes that phrase and other anti-gay put downs.

## Don’t Ignore It

- Ignoring name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse. If other students see you do nothing, they get the message that there is nothing wrong with it.
- Harassment does not “go away on its own.”



### **Don't Be Afraid of Making the Situation Worse**

- 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 isn't always easy. With experience you will become more comfortable in handling it.
- 

### **Don't Excuse the Behavior**

- Saying, "Josh, doesn't really know what it means," or "Sarah was only joking," excuses hurtful behavior.
- 

### **Don't Try to Judge How Upset the Victim Was**

- We have no way of knowing how a victim is really feeling. Often, victims are embarrassed and pretend that they were not offended or hurt. Saying, "Michael didn't seem upset by Laura's remark" trivializes the victim's feelings. It tells the harasser that it is OK to make hurtful comments. It teaches not only the victim but also anyone else in hearing range that they will not be protected from harassment.
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### **Don't Be Immobilized By Fear**

- Making a mistake is far less serious than not acting at all. You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.
- 

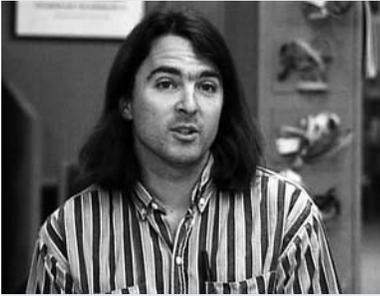
Credit: Excerpted with permission from the *Welcoming Schools Guide* (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project.



### **Intervention Strategy**

"I start writing names on the blackboard when

I hear a student use the word 'gay' in a negative way. Eventually a student will ask me who are all those people written on the blackboard. Then I tell them, 'these are the names of people who I know are LGBT and every time I hear you use "gay" or "fag" as a put down you are hurting someone I care about. Is that what you want to be doing?" —*Relayed by a teacher at a screening of **It's Elementary**.*



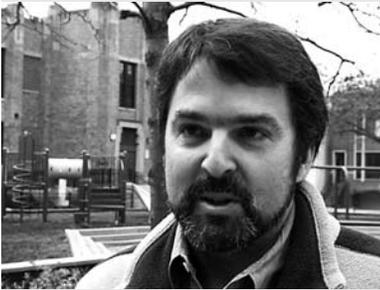
## Voices Of Change

### Daithi Wolfe

Former Third-Grade Teacher at Hawthorne Elementary  
Madison, Wisconsin

Featured in *It's Elementary* and *It's STILL Elementary*

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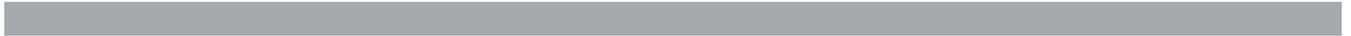
Hawthorne School hosts a diverse group of parents and staff, including same-sex parents. When folks started bringing up issues surrounding diversity, our staff was particularly attuned to actively responding. We felt gay issues are contemporary social justice issues that we could do something about. We started looking for curriculum with the notion that we could apply a similar approach to homophobia that we have applied to sexism and racism.

The first step we made was to draft a mission statement for our school that addressed social justice issues, including anti-homophobia, anti-racism and anti-sexism. This enabled us to defend ourselves when controversy arose in our administration. Also, our teachers' union is very strong in Madison and one of the things that they always defend is free speech and teacher rights in terms of controversial issues. When controversy arose over addressing homophobia into our classrooms, our union was not particularly assertive, but they saw it as part of our rights as teachers, so they defended us to the teeth. For staff, it was just another one of those roadblocks to get through. We said, "you know, this is real curriculum that we teach to real students and it's important for us to educate about real issues." We felt lucky that we had a mission statement to defend us because we know many other teachers who want to do this work, but they don't know how or are not comfortable trying to defend their positions.

We would much rather have kids who are active and engaged than students who sit passively doing their work. When we talked with our students about gay issues, the kids were interested and engaged and questioning. Some were confused, some maybe felt uncomfortable. Some of them wanted to share their own connections because that's what kids want to do. They want to know, "how does that relate to my life?" And these were issues that had come up in our classroom. The kids in my class were dealing with issues of racism and homophobia and wanted tools to confront them.

My parents grew up in the era of the civil rights movement and worked on behalf of it. In their minds race was an important issue, and a black person marrying a white person was acceptable. To me, homophobia is one of the civil rights issues of our time, and I feel like we need to fight it.

# NOTES:



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# 5

## **K-8 LESSONS INSPIRED BY IT'S ELEMENTARY**



## Voices Of Change

**Robbie Tate-Brickel**

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### **From *It's Elementary***

"Some babies, when they get like one or two years old, they start taking a shower with their mom or dad. That doesn't mean they're gay. It's that they don't know how to, you know, take a shower. Because they might drown."

### **From *It's STILL Elementary***

"I treated it just like a different subject. Like oh, we are going to learn something new today, let me participate and say my opinion, get feedback, and just be myself, and learn something, which I did. That documentary definitely exposed me to be not ignorant to gays and lesbians. It helped me realize that just accept people for who they are. Rather than based on, they, like, their personal life. And if they don't do anything to harm you then there's no reason for you to be mad at that person."

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**Robbie Tate-Brickel, a fourth-grader in *It's Elementary*; a business and marketing student at SUNY Old Westbury in *It's STILL Elementary*.**

# Classroom Lessons

This section includes a selection of lesson plans that are related to the content and pedagogy used in the film of *It's Elementary*. There are two versions of the film, a 37-minute training version and a feature-length 78-minute version, featuring 13 educators who found age-appropriate ways to talk about lesbian and gay issues with elementary school students. None of the teachers in the film had received any special training or instruction regarding the inclusion of LGBT lessons in their teaching. While they all received basic pre-service teacher education prior to their full-time classroom assignment, they drew upon basic tenets of learning and pedagogy to guide their work.

Over the last decade a number of schools of education have begun to include training on the integration of LGBT issues as part of pre-service teacher education. However, many teachers, guidance counselors and educators who want to address LGBT issues in their schools and classrooms still have not been given direct instruction and guidance on LGBT-inclusive education. With this in mind, the lessons assembled here provide teachers with more concrete guidance and advice for implementing lessons across the K-8 curriculum. The lessons are organized sequentially starting with the lowest grade level recommended for instruction. The lessons contained here do not depend on prior learning, and can be implemented as stand alone lessons or a part of a more comprehensive unit or module for addressing a variety of skills and content areas. Nonetheless, as with all good teaching, each lesson will require pre-teaching and, as in most cases, will build upon prior learning to access new concepts and information.

To assist educators in implementing the selected lessons, they have been organized to include sections on: Materials Preparation, Goals, Objectives, Instructional Guidance, Pre-Teaching and when appropriate Modifications for Diverse Learners. Each lesson also includes a reference to the chapter in the film where teachers model effective delivery of the particular lesson and/or the pedagogical practices that the chosen lesson is based upon. While the specific objectives of each lesson vary, each is designed to increase students' awareness of the diversity of LGBT people and families, cultivate empathy and prevent prejudice. The process of choosing lessons for this guide was a lengthy one, and there are many more lessons and ideas for approaching LGBT issues than we could assemble here.



## Lesson 1:

# A WELCOMING CLASSROOM

### Grades K-2

*Students in the film talked about how negative references about LGBT people are used as put-downs from early elementary school through middle school. The teachers highlighted in the film set a tone where such put-downs are not acceptable and where conversations about LGBT people could happen in an atmosphere of respect. The following lesson, excerpted with permission from the Welcoming Schools Guide (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project, is a good introductory lesson to help students understand what makes people feel welcome and the effect of hurtful teasing, name-calling and exclusion.*



#### From The Film

"I think the neat thing about this issue is that it's already there—it's

already in the classrooms. The kids are already thinking about it. There's ways to just start it off with [talking about] name calling, with a book, with talking about famous gay and lesbian people. There's ways that are pretty standard, elementary curriculum across this country, which, with a little inventiveness and a little risk, you can start going on." —*Daithi Wolfe, third-grade teacher in It's Elementary*

#### Goals

- To create a more welcoming classroom.
- Students will understand what makes them and other children feel welcome or unwelcome in school.

#### Objectives

- Students will listen to the story *The New Girl...and Me* and talk about feelings.
- Students will apply that discussion to their own experiences.
- Students will be able to give examples of what makes them feel welcome or unwelcome in school.

#### Time Required

One 45-minute session or two 30-minute sessions.

#### Materials

Chart paper and markers, drawing paper, markers or crayons for drawing, pencils.

#### Required Books

*The New Girl...and Me* by Jacqui Robbins, illustrations by Matt Phelan (Antheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006). Two girls become friends when Shakeeta boasts that she has an iguana named Igabelle at home and Mia learns how to help Shakeeta "feel at home."

## ACTIVITY 1: Defining “welcome” and “unwelcome”

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- Talk with your students about what the words “welcome” and “unwelcome” mean. You may choose to ask the students what they think “welcome” and “unwelcome” mean or you may give the students a definition of the words.

**Welcome:** When you feel good/comfortable about where you are and the people you are with.

**Unwelcome:** When you do not feel good/comfortable about where you are or the people you are with.

The teacher in the book *The New Girl...and Me* uses the phrase “make her feel at home.” You may want to say that the phrase, “Make her feel at home” means the same thing as make her feel welcome.

- Read the book *The New Girl...and Me*.
- After reading the book initiate a discussion by asking your students:
  - » Has anyone ever seen an iguana? What did it look like? What did it eat?
  - » What did DJ do or say that made Shakeeta feel unwelcome or “not at home?”
  - » When DJ told Shakeeta that she looked like an iguana, what did other people in the class do?
  - » How do you think Shakeeta felt when children in her class laughed at DJ’s comment?
  - » What did Mia do that helped Shakeeta feel welcome?
  - » How do you think Mia felt after she talked to Shakeeta?
- Ask the students to give examples of when they feel unwelcome. Prompt them to include what makes them feel unwelcome at school. Prompt them to include name-calling and hurtful teasing if they do not bring it up. Record their responses on a chart entitled *I Feel Unwelcome When...*
- Review the chart together, then read some of the responses aloud, and ask your students, “What does it feel like when you feel unwelcome?” You can prompt them to think more about how it feels by using some of the examples that are on the chart. For example, you can say, “How does it feel when someone calls you a name?”
- Next, ask the students to give examples of when they feel welcome. Prompt them to include what other students, teachers and administrators do that helps them feel welcome. Record their responses on a chart entitled *I Feel Welcome When...*
- Review the chart together, read some of the responses, then ask your students, “What does it feel like when you feel welcome?”



## ACTIVITY 2: Student Responses

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- Using the writing prompt, “*I can help others feel welcome by...*” have students draw a welcoming picture and write a response.
- Display the pictures around the room or in the hall near your classroom OR turn the responses into a class book.



### From The Film

“I don't think that it's appropriate that values only be taught at home.

There are social values as well. There are community values. And when you allow a child on a playground to hurl an insult at another child or to say, ‘your mom is queer’ or to say those sorts of things without addressing the issues is I think unconscionable. What's the message the child gets? The child gets the message, ‘my teachers would step in if it was wrong, my teachers would—they know, my teachers would do something.’”

—Woody Price, headmaster, in **It's**

**Elementary**



### TEACHING NOTES

#### Modifications

- If needed, arrange to take dictation from individual students.
- Other suggested books to read: *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (1991), *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola (1979) or *The Sissy Duckling* by Harvey Fierstein (2002).

#### Extension Activities

**Community Building** Brainstorm with your students what could make their classroom and school feel more welcoming. From this list, have the students pick an action that they could take. Make a plan and carry it out.

**Welcoming Classroom Chart** Label a piece of chart paper, “Our Welcoming Classroom” and post it on the wall. When you notice students doing something to make a more welcoming classroom, add their name and what they did to the chart.

Credit: This lesson is based on some ideas from *I Feel Welcome/Unwelcome* in: Froschl, Merle, and Barbara Sprung, and Nancy Mullin-Rindler with Nan Stein and Nancy Gropper. *Quit it!: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Students in Grades K-3*. Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, NEA Professional Library. 1998.

## Lesson 2:

# GAY AND LESBIAN PARENTS AND GUARDIANS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

### Grades K-3

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*In the film, first- and second-grade teachers read the book *Asha's Mums* to their students. The book is about a girl who does not know what to do when her teacher does not believe that she has two mothers. Class discussions following the reading of the book touch on themes of empathy and friendship as well as family diversity.*

*Teaching about families is usually part of the curriculum in early elementary school grades. The following lesson plan, adapted from the Welcoming Schools Guide (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project provides a model to teach children's literature that is inclusive of same-sex families.*

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### Goal

- Students will see that the common bond that holds all kinds of healthy families together is love and caring.

### Objectives

- Students will be able to identify what makes a family.
- Students will be able to identify and describe a variety of families.
- Students will understand that families have some similarities and some differences.

### Time Required

One 45-minute session or two 30-minute sessions.

### Materials

Chart paper and markers.

### Required Books

 (Choose one of the following books.)

*Who's in a Family?* by Robert Skutch, illustrations by L. Neinhaus (Tricycle Press, 1995). This picture book has many different examples of families from the human and animal world. Simple language and pictures work well for younger students.





*All Families are Special* by Norma Simon, illustrations by Teresa Flavin (Albert Whitman & Company, 2003). A teacher who is going to be a grandmother leads a class in an engaging conversation about families. Children share stories about their families, addressing adoption, extended families, single parents, lesbian and gay parents, immigrant families and more.

### **ACTIVITY 1: Before Reading the Book**

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Label a piece of chart paper, "What do we know about families?" Ask the class the following questions and record their answers on the paper.

- What do we know about families?
- Who is in a family?
- What do family members give or share with each other?
- What responsibilities do family members have?

### **ACTIVITY 2: Introduce the Book**

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Before reading the book you have chosen for this lesson plan, ask children to pay attention to the kinds of families that are shown in the book. Tell them you want to see how many different kinds of families we can find in this book.

As you read, pause after each family and ask questions such as, "What do you see in this picture?" or "Who's in this family?"

### **ACTIVITY 3: After Reading the Book**

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Review the students' answers to the question, "What do we know about families?" Then review all the different kinds of families that were in the book. Ask them what they have learned about families from today's class.



## TEACHING NOTES

### Responding to Student Assumptions

While recording and responding to students' comments it is important to affirm children's experiences and also provide a lens through which they can see outside their own experiences. If, as in one of the classrooms shown in *It's Elementary*, a student says that a family is made up of a mother, a father and two children you can acknowledge that some families look like this, but also ask students for other examples of what a family can look like. When students are speaking about their own families, it can be helpful to let them know that "every person gets to decide who their family is." They may decide that their family includes a pet, a cousin who lives elsewhere, or a neighbor.

### Modifications

This activity can be modified for younger students by drawing picture symbols or using magazine cut outs of family members. For example, if a student says that her family consists of a parent, a grandparent and a brother, you can draw a representation of this family.

Credit: This lesson was excerpted with permission from the *Welcoming Schools Guide* (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project.



### Lesson 3:

## AND TANGO MAKES THREE

### Grades 1-3

*In the film, a third-grade student named Emily reads aloud an essay she wrote about her two moms for a Mother's Day writing contest. She shares her experience of another child not being able to come to her house because her moms are lesbian. She talks about having many kids in her class supporting her and how proud she is of her moms. Also in the film, after listening to the book *Asha's Mums*, a little girl asks her teacher, "Do you believe I have two moms?" When the teacher responds that she does believe her, you can visibly see how happy that makes the little girl.*



*Many teachers in the primary grades regularly read out loud to the class to introduce new concepts and build vocabulary. Classroom discussions of gay- and lesbian-headed households help students explore the attributes of healthy families as they learn more about different family structures. One book that lends itself to this dual discussion is the award-winning *And Tango Makes Three*. The book is based on a true story about two male Chinstrap penguins, Roy and Silo, who fall in love and with the help of their keeper, Mr. Gramzay, become fathers to Tango. This is a wonderful story that illustrates the beauty of diverse families.*

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#### Goals

- Students will be able to discuss different family structures inclusive of gay and lesbian parents.
- Students will identify the shared attributes of healthy families.

#### Objectives

- Discuss different family structures inclusive of gay and lesbian parents.
- Identify and discuss basic human needs.
- Understand key vocabulary words that pertain to human needs.
- Utilize key vocabulary in writing and verbal expression.

#### Time Required

Three 30-minute sessions.

#### Materials

Construction paper, pencils, lined handwriting paper, stapler and crayons.

#### Required Book

*And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, illustrations by Henry Cole (Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers, 2005). At New

York City's Central Park Zoo, two male penguins fall in love and start a family by taking turns sitting on an abandoned egg until it hatches.



### Teaching Tip

Before you begin this lesson prepare a poster or bulletin board display that includes the vocabulary lists that will be introduced throughout the lesson (see below). It might be helpful to print the vocabulary words on index cards that are laminated for durability. Attach a small piece of velcro on the back of each card and on the poster/bulletin board to allow for ease in displaying and sharing with students. Create packets of writing paper that includes ten sheets each. These packets will become the content pages of the student family journals you will create during Activity 3.

## ACTIVITY 1: Taking Care of Self and Others

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Open up a conversation with students about what all parents or caregivers need to do in order to take care of a baby. You might begin by using some of the prompts below. Structure your brainstorm by creating a list of different animals and ask students what they think each requires (needs) in order to survive. Record student responses on a piece of chart paper. Circle or underline items that are the same for different animals.

### Suggested Prompts

Human: baby food, milk, water, air, warm shelter, a home, and clothes...

Puppy: puppy food, puppy milk, water, air, a warm and dry place to live...

Fish: fish food, worms or other fish to eat, water (salt or fresh), a certain temperature, sometimes coral or rocks to hide from predators...

Turtle: turtle food, water, sometimes sunlight or a heating rock to keep them at the right temperature, air...

Bird: air, a warm nest, bird food...

Let students know that even if a baby has all the necessary basic needs to live, they will need care and love to thrive.

### Basic Needs Vocabulary

care	grow
live	water
warmth	shelter
air/oxygen	temperature
food/milk	caretakers



In closing the lesson ask students if there are other things that people and animals need to survive and grow. Explore the following questions with them:

- How do you feel when someone takes care of you?
- Does it make you happy when someone takes care of you?
- Have you ever helped to take care of a pet?
- Have you ever helped to take care of a baby?

### **ACTIVITY 2: *And Tango Makes Three***

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Before you begin the story ask students some exploratory questions and review the vocabulary from Activity 1. Some suggested questions:

- Has anyone here been to a zoo?
- What did you see there?
- How did the zoo care for the animals?
- Where any of the animals in families?
- What is a family?
- What do all families have in common?

Read *And Tango Makes Three*. After the story is over ask the students what they liked best about the story. After a brief discussion, tell the students that they are going to talk about the kind of family that Tango was part of in this story. Explore student responses to the following questions:

- How were Roy and Silo like other penguin couples?
- Why do you think Roy and Silo built a nest?
- How were Roy and Silo like other penguin parents?
- Roy and Silo are male penguins. What do you think about them being parents?
- Why did the zookeeper think Roy and Silo were in love?
- Were Roy and Silo a “couple?”
- Were Roy and Silo good parents? Why do you think they were good parents?
- What do we call parents who are of the same sex? (suggested language: gay, lesbian)
- What kind of needs did Tango have?

In closing your discussion explain that what is most important in a family is not who makes up the family but how the family cares for and loves each other just like Roy and Silo’s family.



#### **Teaching Tip**

Provide some photos of baby animals for students to look at or bring some

stuffed animals or figures to class and pass them around for those learners who need a more hands-on experience.

### Sense of Love Vocabulary

love	"in love"
thrive	couple
partner	gay
lesbian	belong
caretaker	family

### Suggested Definitions of Love

- A deep, tender feeling of care toward a person.
- An intense emotional attachment, as for a pet or treasured object.
- When a person wants to care for another person with all their heart.

## Activity 3: Writing and Using New Vocabulary

Distribute the packets of paper prepared in advance. Allow students to choose two pieces of construction paper. Using their crayons, have students create a cover for their journal that includes a picture of Roy and Silo's family. Circulate around the room attaching the covers to the packets with a stapler. Ask students to write a paragraph (or sentences) about Roy and Silo on the first page of their family journals.



### Teaching Tip

You may create a checklist for your students, which will differ according to grade level.

- Did you use complete sentences? (subject/predicate)
- Did you use the correct punctuation? (periods, question marks, commas...)
- Did you use capital letters in the right places?
- Did you use at least three new vocabulary words?

After students have finished their first entry on Roy and Silo have them write a story about their family on the second page. The journal can be revisited over the course of two weeks, allowing students to write a new entry each day about how they are cared for by their family, how they care for others in their family, or how they see other animals care for their offspring.

Credit: This lesson was reprinted with permission from the San Francisco Unified School District, School Health Programs Department.



## Lesson 4:

# TALKING ABOUT FAMILIES

### Grades 2-4

*This lesson provides teachers with an opportunity to use media as way of introducing age-appropriate instruction on family and community. Like the teachers in **It's Elementary**, this lesson allows teachers to build upon student generated discussion that helps them connect their own experiences with those of others in their classroom and larger community. Through the film, **That's a Family!** from GroundSpark, The Respect For All Project educational series, students have the opportunity to hear their peers talk about their families. The companion curriculum guide provides further lessons and activities on diverse family structures.*



### Goals

- To discuss one's own family in creative ways.
- To identify similarities and differences between one's own and other families.
- To expand the students' concept of what makes a family.
- To understand and develop sensitivity to gay and lesbian family structures.

### Objectives

- Students will develop vocabulary related to family diversity.
- Students will create mobiles that represent their families.
- Students will use the mobiles as ways to talk about their families and to learn about other families.
- Students will describe different family structures in a respectful way.

### Time Required

This lesson can be condensed or expanded, depending on the time constraints or time opportunities you have. It will take at least four 30-minute segments, or more if you include pre-teaching. It is recommended that this lesson be implemented over the period of one entire week.

### Materials

Art supplies: wire coat hangers, crayons, paints, markers and/or colored pencils, string or ribbon, and any bits of colorful wrapping paper, ribbons, and/or fabric students may bring in from home; 5 x 7 cards and a hole-punch; the film **That's a Family!** and its curriculum guide.



Photos in this lesson are from **That's a Family!** another Respect For All Project film.



### Teaching Tip

Gather art materials and cards together. A day or more prior to the activity explain to students that the class will be creating individual mobiles to represent their families.

Invite them to bring in any photographs, bits of fabric, stickers or artifacts they may want to use to individualize their mobiles. Explain these will not be returned, so they are not to bring in anything irreplaceable. It could be useful for the teacher to make one mobile as an example. On the day of the activity, organize the supplies so they are readily available to students.

Explain to students that a mobile is a way to express ideas, feelings and information. It is an art form. In creating a mobile to represent a family, each student can choose several 5 x 7 cards to decorate and hang on the mobile.



### Pre-Teaching

Make sure that children have reviewed some vocabulary related to family life before beginning this lesson. Basic vocabulary related to family life (e.g. home, love, parent) should be expanded to include respectful words for describing families from all backgrounds. The Curriculum Guide for ***That's a Family!*** provides a suggested list of vocabulary words and guidance on introducing the vocabulary to students. (Also see Vocabulary Guide in the Appendix on page 121 of this guide.)

### Activity 1: Images of Different Families

**Time: 60 minutes**

Before you begin, create a chart or bulletin board that highlights two or three of the family types featured in the film, be sure to include families with gay and lesbian parents. Under each family create a chart that has the following prompts listed down the left side:

- **People** in each family
- **Places** where the family lives or where they went together
- **Things** that the family did together
- **Ideas** about what it is like to be part of that family

See example of chart on page 76 in this guide.

Introduce and show the film ***That's a Family!***

After viewing the film, ask students to generate responses to each prompt for all the families you included on your chart. Try to include a picture or example of each family to remind students of what they saw in the film. Ask students to use the vocabulary included in the film and discuss during pre-teaching while responding to the prompts. For example, when responding to the "People" category for Josh's family, a student may refer to his two moms as "friends." You could then refer back to the vocabulary introduced in pre-teaching to reframe the description of Josh's family as headed by "two moms who are lesbians."

Utilize the discussion that follows this activity as a transition into the next activity where students will have the chance to make a mobile that talks about the People, Places, Things and Ideas related to their families.

## Activity 2: Creating Family Mobiles

**Time: 30 Minutes**

### Pre-Teaching

Talk about the sample mobile, if appropriate. Remember that since this is a hanging art form, students can decorate both sides of each card with drawings, photographs, words or symbols. Encourage students to create borders, use a variety of colors and materials, and to mix words and images to make their art celebratory and unique. Students are to choose three categories and then make several cards for each category, stringing them together using the ribbon and hole-punch.

### Creating the Cards and Assembling the Mobiles

Students will decorate a card for each member of their family to string together for the family line. They can make as many cards as they like for the places, things and ideas categories. The number of cards students design will vary. Once the cards are completed, use the hole-punch to make holes and thread the cards together in categories and tie to the coat hanger.



### Category Prompts

These are optional and may work best with students in Grades 3 and 4.

- **People** in my family.  
Ideas of things to include on these cards: name, relationship to artist (sister, grandmother), three words to describe this person, a photograph or drawing, three things this person loves to do, if this person were an animal, he/she would be a...because, this person would NEVER..., this person's favorite (song, food, holiday, color), etc.
- **Places** that are important to my family.  
Ideas of things to include on this card: home spaces, favorite restaurants, places of worship, vacation spots, places my family visits on weekends, places my family came from or where we still have family members, places we would like to visit.

- **Things** my family does together.

Ideas for this card include: cooking, cleaning house, going to church or temple, playing games, watching television or movies, traveling to new or familiar places, visiting friends and relatives, gardening, playing sports, going to parks or museums, celebrating holidays.

- **Ideas** that represent my family.

This category could include words, a family motto, flag, or coat of arms, family beliefs, funny things that happened in my family, three things my family is proud of, symbols of my family, and/or a defining family story.

### Activity 3: Sharing and Discussing the Mobiles

**Time: 30 Minutes**

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Sit in a circle. Ask students to share their mobiles and tell three things about their family, using the cards as prompts. Provide opportunities for students to comment and ask questions about each other's mobiles. Ask questions to stretch students' assumptions and preconceptions, such as:

- What if a family has no place to live, are they still a family?
- What if family members live in different places?
- What can we learn about families from these mobiles?
- What family structures are included in these mobiles?
- Are there any family structures that are missing? If so, what are they?
- What is sometimes hard for the children in the film? (Examples: Fernando from a single parent family: "Other kids assume I have a dad." Or Josh with lesbian parents: "Kids use mean words for gays and lesbians.")



# Family Chart Handout

	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Emily's Family</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Josh's Family</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fernando's Family</b></p>
<p><b>People</b></p>			
<p><b>Places</b></p>			
<p><b>Things</b></p>			
<p><b>Ideas</b></p>			

## Lesson 5:

# DIALOGUE ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS

## Grades 3-8

*In the film a number of teachers lead discussions about current events. A teacher of an eighth-grade class at the Manhattan Country Day School had students write their opinions about whether LGBT people should be included in the curriculum and then led a spirited class discussion about the topic. A third-grade teacher at Public School 87 in New York invited a student to read aloud her essay about her family—including her two mothers—and then asked students to pretend to be judges and discuss whether or not lesbian and gay people should be allowed to get married. In the “deleted scene” section on the **It’s Elementary** DVD, disk two, a fifth-grade class discusses the U.S. Bill of Rights in conjunction with the debate over LGBT people serving in the military.*

*A key component to these discussions is that dialogue is allowed to take place. Remember that your class might include people who have loved ones who are LGBT, people who may be questioning their own sexuality, and people who have been raised with strong anti-LGBT religious beliefs. Leave room for a wide variety of opinions with the caveat that all opinions are expressed respectfully. In your classrooms, as in all of the classrooms highlighted in **It’s Elementary**, students have already received many messages about LGBT people. Classroom discussions are not introducing a new topic; rather they are providing a structured format for having dialogue.*

*The lesson plan that follows can be modified as needed for different grade levels.*

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### Goals

- Students will develop critical thinking and writing skills.
- Students will increase their knowledge of current events and politics.
- Students will identify the sometimes contradictory values that underlie laws, policies and practices.





### Teaching Tip

In *It's Elementary*, the principal of Cambridge Friends Elementary

School talks about the fact that there are school and community values, not just individual family values. Teachers can use current events to not just open a neutral dialogue, but to connect LGBT issues to other topics/values discussed in class and to promote acceptance of and fairness for all people.

## Objectives

- Students will be able to critically read written material about current events.
- Students will use written and spoken language skills to express their opinions regarding current events.

## Time Required

One 30 - 45 minute session.

## Materials

Newspaper or magazine article about current events related to LGBT people.

## Instructions

- Find at least two newspaper or magazine articles about current events related to LGBT people. Topics might include: marriage equality, the formation of a gay-straight alliance, efforts to include sexual orientation in anti-bullying legislation, or a student who got disciplined for wearing an anti-gay T-shirt.
- Introduce the topic covered in the article by giving a brief explanation of the issue. For example, if the topic is curriculum, you could give a current example of a controversy about teaching material related to LGBT people. If the topic is marriage provide a brief overview of what might be happening in your state regarding this issue and contrast it by describing a place where something different is happening.
- Ask students to read one or two articles about the topic or summarize the content of the articles for the class.
- Ask students to either:
  - » Respond in writing to specific questions about this topic.
  - » Meet in small groups to discuss their own opinions about this topic.
  - » Have a debate by dividing the class into two groups to strategize how to best present arguments on either side of the issue in question.
- Conduct a class discussion about the topic that allows for a wide variety of opinions. Examine ways that the topic being discussed may relate to other topics that have been covered in class—examples could include civil rights, censorship or themes in novels.

## Voices Of Change

### Laurie Cicotello

Former High School English Teacher in Hawai'i  
Hastings, Nebraska

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In late fall, I learned that my story about growing up with a transgender parent would be running in *Cosmopolitan*. I met with my principal regarding the potential impact of someone in our school community seeing the article and he suggested incorporating the article into a lesson. I ran two copies, with one version blocking personal identifiers and the second version leaving my identifiers intact. My students developed three anonymous questions for "the author," no holds barred.

When I collected the cards, the anger and hatred contained in the questions struck me. I handed out the second copy of the article, and several students said, "Oh, miss! This is about you!" or "Oh, miss, I need my questions back. I shamed." I reiterated that the questions were anonymous and that my feelings were not hurt.

I answered questions such as how my folks remained married after so long, how I dealt with situations growing up and how students' off-handed comments impacted me. During our discussions, several students said they never considered the impact of their words, even after admitting they had LGBT family members or friends.

The principal observed my classes, in case of backlash. The calls never came.

Then...one day I found myself at a luau. "I need to talk with you," said a woman with long black hair. "My son told me about that article you taught in class." I started to panic but then she continued, "I read the article. I told my son that only family members share something that personal, so the fact that you shared that story makes you part of our ohana."

Ohana, meaning "chosen family" in Hawaiian, is a concept I now incorporate into my classroom vocabulary to reach out to students about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.



## Lesson 6:

# DEVELOPING EMPATHY AND BEING AN ALLY

### Grades 4-6



*In the film, a girl who has lesbian parents talked about how important it was for her that her friends stood by her when other students said mean things about gay and lesbian people. Also in the film a fifth-grade teacher talks with her students about being made fun of and how bad that feels. This activity will help students develop empathy and strategies to respond to anti-gay language.*

### Goals

- Students will increase their understanding of the impact of name-calling on people who have friends or family members who are LGBT.
- Students will increase their ability to be a friend and an ally to people who are targeted by name-calling.

### Objectives

- Students will be able to define the words “empathy” and “ally.”
- Students will be able to identify ways in which name-calling related to LGBT people is hurtful.
- Students will be able to identify strategies to interrupt name-calling.

### Time Required

Two 30-40 minute sessions.

### Materials

Enough copies of the “My School Is Accepting—But Things Could Be Better” handout for the whole class.

Four pieces of paper filled out as described in Activity 2.



## TEACHING NOTES

**Basic Definitions** This lesson plan assumes that the class has already had some classroom conversations about LGBT people. It focuses on the impact of name-calling and the development of empathy in relation to an elementary student who has lesbian mothers. For more information about defining words such as lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender see the vocabulary words in the Appendix on page 121 of this guide.

**Children with LGBT Parents** You may have children in your class who have LGBT parents—some may be open with their classmates about this and some may not be. If you are aware of this, you may want to talk with these parents to ask if they have any concerns about their child feeling comfortable when this lesson is taught. It is important that a child not feel pressured to be out about his or her parents. In addition, you want children to recognize that having LGBT parents is another kind of family structure. Of course, you may not know that a child in your class has an LGBT parent. Also, consider how the content of this lesson will sound to a child who has not told anyone at school about his or her family composition. Think about inclusive language that you can use that might make this child feel less isolated. For example, you could say:

*Some of us have lesbian and gay people in our lives who mean a lot to us while some of us may not really have thought about the fact that some kids have two moms or two dads. Some of Robert's classmates (the boy in the handout) who were using hurtful language might not have known that this language would hurt people.*

## ACTIVITY 1: Developing Empathy

- Write “name-calling” on the left side of the board and the word “empathy” on the right side. Ask students to brainstorm everything they think about when they hear the word name-calling. Record their responses on the board. When you are satisfied with the number of responses they have given, ask them what they notice about the list the class generated. Help them identify any themes in their list such as: the way name-calling makes someone feel, motives for name-calling, or situations where name-calling might occur.
- Ask for a volunteer to define the word empathy. If no one knows the word, define it for them. For example:

**Empathy** is how a person feels when he or she can understand someone else’s feelings and motives in a certain situation; OR

**Empathy** is when you understand another person’s feelings by remembering or imagining being in a similar situation.



## From The Film

“It’s amazing how teachers—no offense—but it’s amazing how teachers

don’t notice all the stuff that’s going on. They don’t necessarily use the word ‘fag,’ but they say ‘oh way, you gay or something?’ or something like that. And it’s really, it makes you feel like weird in your stomach.” —Third-grader in

**It’s Elementary**



- Explain that you are going to ask them to read a short essay by Robert, an 11-year-old boy who lives with his family, which is made up of Robert, his little brother and his two mothers. Tell them that as they read the article you want them to consider the impact of name-calling and whether they have empathy for Robert.
- After students have read the article have them meet in small groups of four to five students. Make sure to have one person in each group be designated as the recorder who will write down all of their ideas. Another person could be designated as the reporter to report back the group's ideas. Write the following questions on the board and ask each group to answer them:
  - » How do you think Robert feels when he hears people say things like, "This is gay" or "You're so gay?"
  - » Do you have empathy for Robert? Why or why not?
- As the groups are meeting, go from group to group to check for understanding and to make sure they are staying on track.
- Ask each group to report back the feelings they think Robert had.
- Lead a class discussion about whether your students have ever felt similar to how they imagined Robert felt. Consider prompts to generate discussion such as:
  - » What situations led to those feelings?
  - » How did you respond?
  - » What made you feel better?
  - » If you were Robert what would you do when people said things that felt hurtful?
  - » Do you have empathy for Robert because of these situations that you've experienced?

## ACTIVITY 2: Being an Ally

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- Put the word **Ally** on the board. Ask students if they know what this word means. Be prepared to define the word:

**ALLY** A person who does something to help or stand up for another person. For example, if a friend of yours was being teased, you would be an ally if you asked the person doing the teasing to stop being mean.
- Tell students that you are going to ask them to think about different ways that someone might be able to be an ally to Robert.

- Take four pieces of paper or four sticky notes and put one of the following labels on each of them:

1: I would be VERY UNCOMFORTABLE.

2: I would be A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE.

3: I would be PRETTY COMFORTABLE.

4: I would be VERY COMFORTABLE.

Put each piece of paper in order somewhat evenly spaced across a part of the wall where you have enough space for students to line up.

- Read the words on each piece of paper. Tell students that you are going to read some statements about ways they could be an ally to Robert. Ask them to imagine that Robert was their friend and that they had empathy for what he was going through. When you read each statement ask them to stand next to the piece of paper that best describes how they would feel taking the action described by the statement. Tell the students that there is not a right or wrong way to respond. After you read each statement and the students have chosen where they want to stand ask for some volunteers to say why they chose to stand where they did. Engage in discussion about what makes it hard or easy to stand up for someone. Repeat this for each statement.
  - » Talk to Robert individually and tell him that you are sorry that people are calling him names and using phrases like, "This is so gay."
  - » Talk to Robert and ask him what he thinks would help people stop name-calling. Offer to help him.
  - » When you hear a person say something like , "That's so gay" say, "It's not OK to say that. Using the word gay like that hurts people's feelings."
  - » Tell a teacher or another adult that you're bothered by the kind of words you're hearing other students use. Ask this adult to do something about the situation.
- Ask the class to share what they have learned about how to be an ally for someone. Write all of these on the board.
- Ask if anyone in the class has a suggestion for class-rules related to name-calling.



### Teaching Tip

You may want to define any of the words or phrases that you think will be unfamiliar to students. For help with defining words please see the Vocabulary Guide in the Appendix on page 121. If you have not had conversations about LGBT people in the past leave time for some questions and conversations from students. In the context of this lesson plan it would be helpful to keep the focus on families. For example: *There are families that have two moms, two dads, etc. The article that we're about to read is about a boy who has two mothers. His mothers are lesbians. That's a word for women who when they fall in love, fall in love with women.*



## Handout

# My School Is Accepting—But Things Could Be Better

By Robert Mercier

My name is Robert Mercier. I'm eleven years old, and I am in sixth grade. I go to Doyle-Ryder Elementary which is in Flint, Michigan. I have two moms and a little brother who I love a lot. He is almost five. Our family is one of just a few families with LGBT parents in our community. I am proud to have two moms.

My school seems to be OK with people who are LGBT. My friends all know I have two moms and are OK with it. I think they react better if I just tell them when we first become friends. I think that if you don't come out right away when you meet someone, it's like you are not OK with it, maybe kind of ashamed, and it's easier for other kids to say mean things to you or about you. At the beginning of each school year, my moms go and tell my teacher that I have two moms. I haven't had one teacher that has been obviously uncomfortable with it.

The only thing that annoys me at school is when people start saying stuff like, "This is gay" or "You're gay." I think that saying these things is a way to bully other kids. When I hear people say that, I tell them to stop, but they normally just keep doing it. The teachers don't do anything about it either, but some of my friends and their parents tell them to stop too. But if only a few people are telling the kids who are saying that to stop, they are just going to keep saying it. (I can't believe they actually think it is cool to say stuff like that!) I think that if the schools would start to pay attention more, they would see that it is a problem too.

Sometimes, not as often, some of the boys in my school (always the boys) have started saying stuff like, "Dude, you're a lesbian." I believe that the children who say this phrase don't understand what they are saying.

I think that if some of the kids who have LGBT parents and other kids whose parents support LGBT people would get together and talk to the schools about the things kids say, they might pay better attention. I think one reason I don't do it is that I'm scared the principal or the other sources of power at the school might discriminate against my family. The other reason is that there aren't many other kids and their parents who would speak up.

When kids learn that I have two moms, they are normally OK with it. Sometimes I'll come across someone who says it is weird but that doesn't bother me because I'm fine with my family. I tend to not be very good friends with the kids who say it is weird to have LGBT parents because I am almost certain that the kids who say that are some of the few who are not OK with it. I think it helps that my family and I are so out with who we are.

Other than that situation, my school is very accepting. I could tell just about anyone that I have two moms, and they would be OK with it. But until the kids stop saying "This is gay, That's gay," I am going to do my best to get them to stop saying that and make my school a safer environment for the other kids with LGBT parents.

Credit: This essay was reprinted with permission from the *Colage (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere) Newsletter*, Vol. 18, #3. 2006

# Voices Of Change

## Arunan Kono-Soosaipillai

Second-Grade Teacher  
San Francisco, California

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I was lucky enough to teach a wonderful second grade student with two moms. She and her family gave me a lot of guidance and advice. It was a great opportunity to stretch myself as a teacher. I began adjusting the curriculum by using incidental references to diverse families in homework and word problems such as, "A student got three jelly beans from his mom and two from his other mom. How many jelly beans does he have?" This enabled the repetition that the younger kids need without having to do dozens of "diversity" lessons. I also started talking about families in general, regardless of the type of family represented in a book, by asking, "Now this story/song has a family with a mom and a dad, but are all families like that?" I told my students about my own parents who had an arranged marriage, and then got divorced. Some kids wanted to talk about their own families, but my student with two moms never did. She was a fantastic writer and wrote a lot about how much she loved her family. She was not one to jump up and say out loud "Hey I have two moms!" and it was important for me and the other students to respect that. We read a lot of books about diverse families that included LGBT-headed families, but the runaway favorite was *And Tango Makes Three*. I think they liked this book because it was a happy book about a loving family.

One of my classes needed some lessons beyond, "there are gays and lesbians in the world," which they already knew all about in kindergarten. So I did a lesson about my LGBT heroes Cheryl Swoopes, the Olympic gold medalist and national women's basketball star, and George Takei, the *Star Trek* actor who played Mr. Sulu. It was really helpful for us to define and use terms like "gay," "lesbian," "queer," and even "straight," which were unfamiliar and uncomfortable for a lot of the kids at first. A student adviser who identified as lesbian also let staff know that we could talk to the kids about her sexual orientation which was a big help because it allowed us to talk about someone they know and love. When we watched the film *That's a Family!* the section on divorced families got all of the attention, partly because a classmate's parents had gotten divorced that year and she was willing to share with them. But the chapter on LGBT-headed families was no big deal for my students. Like all families, special in their own way, they were just another family and that is what I really hoped they would understand.

Community building, mutual respect, the right to pass, creating a safe, secure, happy learning environment where the kids support each other is fundamental to everything!



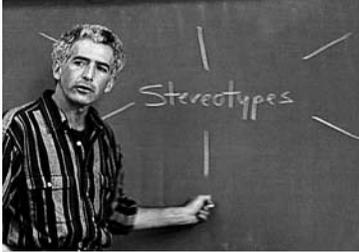
Note: *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. See the lesson, *And Tango Makes Three*, on page 68 of this guide.

## **Lesson 7:**

# **STEREOTYPES ABOUT LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE**

### **Grades 4-5 And Grades 6-8**

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*In the film, a number of lesson plans helped students look at stereotypes as they broadly affect their lives, specifically in relation to lesbian and gay people. The fourth-grade class at Public School 87 in New York City, participated in a word association exercise to explore stereotypes about lesbian and gay people. The third-grade lesson from the Hawthorne Elementary Public School in Madison, Wisconsin, and the eighth-grade lesson from Burbank Public Middle School in San Francisco used word webs.*

*In all of these lessons it was apparent that teachers were building upon teaching tools and content that they had previously used in their classrooms. A fourth-grade teacher from Public School 87 referred back to a similar exercise that the class had done related to stereotypes about Native Americans. An eighth-grade teacher from Burbank Middle School started a lesson by discussing stereotypes that students experienced about ethnic groups, teens and others before moving on to stereotypes about lesbian and gay people.*

*In schools where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) people have not previously been discussed in the curriculum, it is helpful to use lessons that relate to material that has been taught, such as other units about discrimination and stereotypes. The following lesson plans combine elements from a number of the lessons highlighted in the film. The first lesson plan is designed for grades 4-5 and the second one for grades 6-8.*

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# STEREOTYPES ABOUT LGBT PEOPLE

## Grades 4-5

### Goals

- Students will increase their awareness of stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
- To dispel students' stereotypes and misinformation about LGBT people.

### Objectives

- Students will be able to define the word stereotype.
- Students will be able to identify stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
- Students will learn that LGBT people are represented among all races, genders, religions, socio-economic classes and professions.
- Students will learn that LGBT people have made important contributions within the United States and beyond.

### Time Required

One 45-minute session or two 30-minute sessions.

### Materials

Chart paper and markers

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Cards (on page 94 in this guide) cut into individual cards. (Optional)

### Activity 1: Defining Stereotypes

---

- Write the word *stereotype* on the board. Ask students what the word means. Record their answers on the board or easel paper.
- Write on the board the word "kindergartners" and ask students to brainstorm all of the stereotypes they have heard about kindergartners. (You can also substitute 'girls' or 'boys' for kindergartners.) Ask students:
  - » Do some kindergartners fit some of these stereotypes?
  - » Do all kindergartners fit all of these stereotypes?
  - » How do you think these stereotypes might make kindergartners feel?





- Make sure students recognize that:
  - » A stereotype makes people believe that everyone who is part of a certain group is the same in some way. For example, all teenagers cause trouble, or all girls can't do math, or all boys are not sensitive to other people's feelings.
  - » Stereotypes are hurtful. Sometimes they make us think we can't do things that maybe we actually can do. Sometimes they make us ignore what other people are capable of doing.

## Activity 2: Stereotypes about LGBT People

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- Form groups of four to five students each. Ask each group to brainstorm all the words they think about when they think about LGBT people. Have them write down their list on a piece of large paper.
- Ask each group to read aloud their list and record it on the board OR post the lists and read them aloud.
- Review the whole list. Ask:
  - » What do you notice about the words on this list?
  - » Where did you learn the things you brainstormed?
- Review the class definition of stereotypes.
- Review how stereotypes can be hurtful.
- Ask the group to identify why some things on the list are stereotypes.
- Discuss why these stereotypes are incorrect and hurtful to LGBT people and people with LGBT family members.
- Ask the students, "Looking back at our definition of stereotypes—is there anything you would add or subtract?"

## Activity 3: The Diversity of LGBT People

---

Taking a look at the diversity among LGBT people is a natural follow-up to discussing stereotypes and where they come from. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are represented among all races, professions, etc. Some LGBT people fit some of the stereotypes and some do not. This activity helps students see the breadth of the LGBT community. Some of the famous people featured in this activity were also featured in the Hawthorne Elementary School Classroom unit on famous LGBT people.

- Form small groups of four to five students each.
- Pass to each group at least five LGBT people cards.  
There are enough cards so you can pick and choose the cards that best reflect the interests, age, and reading level of your students. Make sure that the cards given to each group are diverse in relation to gender, profession, race, ethnicity, etc. You do not need to use all of the cards.

- Ask the groups to read the cards aloud within their group.
- Once they have read the cards, ask the groups to discuss the following questions: (It may be helpful to have adults or older students monitor the small group discussions).
  - » Were you surprised to learn that this person is gay or lesbian? Why or why not?
  - » What about them made you think they were not gay or lesbian?
  - » What more did you learn about them besides that they were gay or lesbian? Did that also surprise you and why?
  - » How does this person challenge our stereotypes we put up on the board about gay and lesbian people?
  - » What does this teach us about stereotypes?
- At the end of the activity, ask each group to report back what they learned about stereotypes and LGBT people.



## TEACHING NOTES

### Extension Activity Media Analysis

Have students record references to LGBT people that they see on television or hear in music and discuss how the media perpetuates stereotypes.

- What other groups are stereotyped or ridiculed in pop culture?
- What have different groups done about it?
- What can young people do about it?

This extension activity can be used to generate deeper conversations about stereotypes and harmful language. Discussion questions might include:

- Why do you think certain language is used?
- How do you think the language makes people feel?
- Where do you find negative, positive or neutral portrayals of LGBT people?
- What do you think about the way that LGBT people are portrayed?

It can also be used in conjunction with writing assignments or math lessons. For example, students can be asked to draw graphs representing what kind of language is used where in the school or to use math skills to look at the frequency or percentage of positive, negative or neutral portrayals/referrals of LGBT people on television or in music.



## From The Film

"It should be mandatory, and I think that it's a healthy way of

teaching students to respect each other, understand each other. Academics are definitely important, but we also want them to develop, to reach an understanding so that they can resolve a crisis without becoming explosive. They need to understand it, so they can move on to learning." –George Sloan, middle school principal in *It's Elementary*

# STEREOTYPES ABOUT LGBT PEOPLE

## Grades 6-8

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### Goal

- Students will increase their understanding of stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

### Objectives

- Students will increase their understanding of the impact of stereotypes.
- Students will be able to identify stereotypes about LGBT people.
- Students will learn that LGBT people are represented among all races, genders, religions, socio-economic classes and professions.
- Students will learn that LGBT people have made important contributions within the United States and beyond.

### Time Required

One to three 45-minute sessions depending on the format used.

### Materials

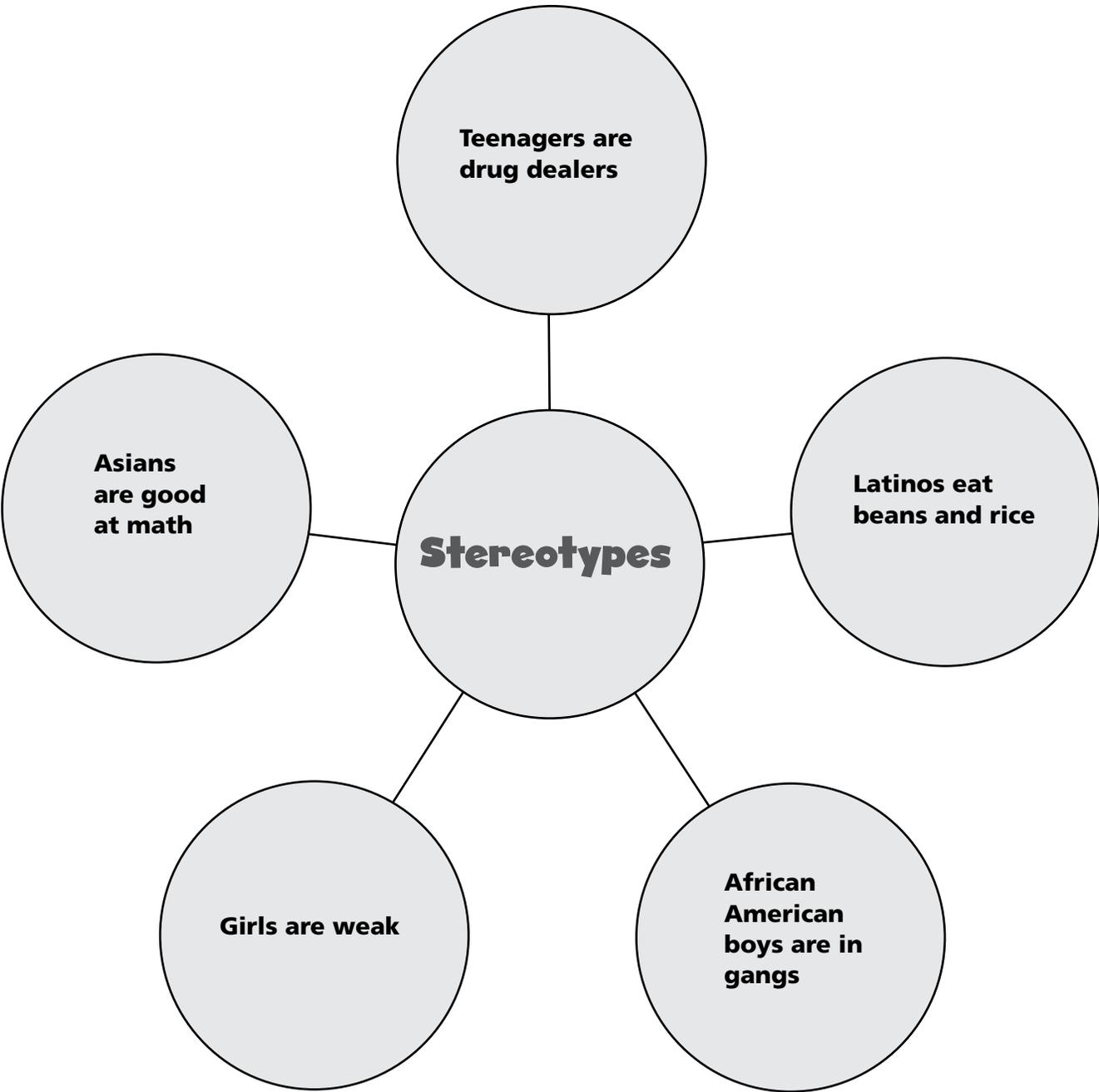
Chart paper and markers.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Cards (on page 94) cut into individual cards.

### Activity 1: What's a Stereotype?

---

- Draw a circle with the word *stereotypes* in the center.
- Ask students to give examples of stereotypes that they have heard or experienced about their own group or about others.
- Record the responses in a web, building from the word *stereotypes* in the center. For example you might have something that looks like the diagram on the following page.





- As you discuss these stereotypes with the students, draw out important facts about stereotypes. For example:
  - » A stereotype is something that may be true of some people within a group some of the time but is applied to a whole group.
  - » Stereotypes are hurtful.
  - » Stereotypes can make us think we cannot do things that we might be able to do and they can make us ignore what other people are capable of doing.
  - » Even stereotypes that seem positive or neutral on the surface (for example: Asians are good at math) can be hurtful, because they paint a whole group as being the same and they set up false expectations about an individual's interests and abilities.

### Activity 2: Reflection

---

- Ask students to keep in mind what they have learned about stereotypes and then think about their own attitudes toward LGBT people. Tell them that you know that in your class there are people with a wide range of experiences and opinions regarding LGBT people. Some students may not be aware that they have ever spoken to a LGBT person, some may be LGBT themselves or be uncertain of their own sexual orientation, and some may have family members or friends who are LGBT. Reassure them that there are no right or wrong responses to the writing assignment that you are about to give them. Ask them to take about ten minutes to write at least one paragraph and hopefully two about:
  - » Their attitudes right at this moment about gay men and lesbians.
  - » What they would most like to learn about gay men and lesbians.
- If you have time, ask for a few volunteers to read their reflections out loud.

### Activity 3: More Information

---

In the film, two young people from an organization called Community United Against Violence talk to the students at Burbank Middle School about their experiences as gay and lesbian youth. If you have access to this kind of organization with trained speakers you can proceed with this lesson plan by having the students hear from speakers. If you do not have such an organization in your area, you can use one of the following options as a way to help students counter stereotypes about LGBT people.

#### LGBT People

- Form small groups of four to five students each. Provide each group with at least five cards from the list of famous LGBT people. Ask the groups to read the cards aloud within their group. Once they have read the cards ask the groups to discuss:

- » Which people were you most surprised to learn were LGBT?
  - » Which people have you heard of before? Of those people, which did you know were LGBT?
  - » In what ways do these people fit the stereotypes about LGBT people that we brainstormed? In what ways don't they fit these stereotypes?
  - » What does learning something about these people tell us about stereotypes?
  - » What does learning something about these people tell us about LGBT people?
- At the end of the activity, ask each group to report back what they learned about stereotypes and LGBT people.

### Activity 4: Further Reflection

---

Ask students to write a paragraph or two either in class or as homework:

- Have there been changes in what you think about LGBT people?
- Have your views about any stereotypes changed?



#### TEACHING NOTES

#### Extension Activities

**History/Biography:** Have students conduct further research on a famous person that is described in the Famous People cards.

**Media Analysis:** Have students record references to LGBT people that they see on television or hear in music and discuss how the media perpetuates stereotypes.

- What other groups are stereotyped or ridiculed in pop culture?
- What have different groups done about it?
- What can young people do about it?

These extension activities can be used to generate deeper conversations about stereotypes and harmful language. Discussion questions might include:

- Why do you think certain language is used?
- How do you think the language makes people feel?
- Where do you find negative, positive or neutral portrayals of LGBT people?
- What do you think about the way that LGBT people are portrayed?



# Famous Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender People Cards

All of the people listed here are LGBT



## Barney Frank

**1940-present:** An American politician and a member of the United States House of Representatives. As an openly gay male Democrat, he has represented Massachusetts's Fourth congressional district since 1981.

**It's Elementary**

## Lupe Valdez

**1947-present:** An American who on January 1, 2005, became the first woman and openly lesbian to be sworn in as Sheriff of Dallas County, Texas.

**It's Elementary**

## Rudy Galindo

**1969-present:** An openly gay male Mexican American figure skater who won the 1988 World Junior Championship and the U.S. senior championships in 1989 and 1990.

**It's Elementary**

## James Baldwin

**1924-1987:** African-American novelist, playwright and civil rights activist. Baldwin's work deals with issues related to being black and gay. He is best known for his novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953).

**It's Elementary**

## Barbara Jordan

**1936-1996:** An African-American politician from Texas who served as congresswoman in the United States House of Representatives from 1973 to 1979. Barbara lived for 25 years with her companion Nancy Earl.

**It's Elementary**

## Evelyn Mantilla

**1978-present:** Puerto Rican-American politician represents the Fourth district of the Connecticut House of Representatives. She is one of the few acting politicians who is openly bisexual and a person of color.

**It's Elementary**

## Sir Ian McKellen

**1939-present:** A gay English stage and screen actor and two-time Academy Award® nominee. He is best known for his roles as Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* and as Magneto in *X-Men*. He has been a vocal activist for LGBT rights.

**It's Elementary**

## Tammy Baldwin

**1962-present:** First American woman elected to Congress from the state of Wisconsin. She was also the first ever openly gay politician to be elected to the House of Representatives.

**It's Elementary**

## José Zuniga

**1970-present:** American Army veteran named the 1992 Soldier of the Year. Six weeks later he came out as a gay man. As a result of this he was no longer allowed to remain in the Army.

**It's Elementary**

## Elton John

**1947-present:** An English pop/rock singer, composer and pianist. Elton John, who is openly gay, wrote the music for the musical *The Lion King* and is one of the most successful musical artists of all time.

**It's Elementary**

## Lance Bass

**1979–present:** An American singer best known from the former pop group N\*Sync. He came out in 2006 in the front-page cover article for *People* magazine.

**It's Elementary**

## John Ameachi

**1970–present:** A retired Nigerian-English NBA basketball player who publicly announced his gay identity in February 2007. He is the first player associated with the NBA to come out.

**It's Elementary**

## Ellen DeGeneres

**1958–present:** An openly American lesbian actress, stand-up comedian, and currently the Emmy Award-winning host of the syndicated talk show *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

**It's Elementary**

## Frida Kahlo

**1907–1954:** A bisexual Mexican painter who depicted the indigenous culture of her country in a style combining realism, symbolism and surrealism.

**It's Elementary**

## Sheryl Swoopes

**1971–present:** An African-American lesbian professional basketball player in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). As a three-time Olympic Gold Medalist and WNBA MVP, Swoopes is the most recognizable athlete to come out in a team sport.

**It's Elementary**

## Melissa Etheridge

**1961–present:** An American lesbian Academy Award-winning rock musician and singer. Etheridge won the Oscar® for Best Original Song, featured in Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.

**It's Elementary**

## Christine Penner

**1957–present:** In 2007, this American *Los Angeles Times* sportswriter underwent sexual reassignment surgery, changing his name from Mike to Christine after 23 years of employment as a man.

**It's Elementary**

## Patria Jimenez

**1957–present:** A Mexican lesbian politician. In 1997 she became the first openly gay member of Mexico's legislature in the country's history—indeed, the first in any legislature in Latin America.

**It's Elementary**

## Christina Aguilera

**1980–present:** An openly bisexual American pop singer and songwriter. She came to prominence following her debut album *Christina Aguilera* (1999), which was a critical and commercial success.

**It's Elementary**

## George Takai

**1937–present:** A Japanese-American actor best known for his portrayal of Mr. Sulu in the acclaimed *Star Trek* television and film series. Takei is an openly gay advocate for LGBT rights.

**It's Elementary**

## Josephine Baker

**1906–1975:** An African-American lesbian entertainer most noted for her singing and contributions to the Civil Rights Movement in North America.

**It's Elementary**

## B.D. Wong

**1960–present:** An openly gay Asian-American actor. He is best known for his roles as Dr. George Huang on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, as Dr. Henry Wu in *Jurassic Park* and Ngwang Jigme in *Seven Years in Tibet*.

**It's Elementary**

**Marlon Brando**

**1924-2004:** Bisexual two-time Academy Award®-winning American actor and star of *The Godfather*. He was named one of the greatest male stars of all time by the American Film Institute.

**It's Elementary****Billie Joe Armstrong**

**1972-present:** A self-identified bisexual American lead vocalist, main lyricist, and guitarist for the rock band Green Day.

**It's Elementary****Rosie O'Donnell**

**1962-present:** An American lesbian 11-time Emmy Award-winning American talk show host, comedienne and stage actress. O'Donnell and her partner are long-time supporters and activists for same-sex households and marriage rights.

**It's Elementary****Angelina Jolie**

**1975-present:** Bisexual American film actress and Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency. She has received three Golden Globe Awards, two Screen Actors Guild Awards and an Academy Award®.

**It's Elementary****Oscar Wilde**

**1854-1900:** A bisexual Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and short story writer. Known for his barbed wit, he was one of the most successful playwrights of late-Victorian London, and one of the greatest celebrities of his day.

**It's Elementary****Walt Whitman**

**1819-1892:** A gay American poet, essayist, journalist and humanist. Proclaimed the "greatest of all American poets" by many foreign observers a mere four years after his death.

**It's Elementary****Bayard Rustin**

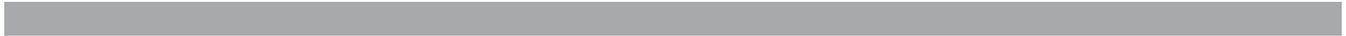
**1912-1987:** A gay African-American civil rights activist and principal organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He counseled Martin Luther King, Jr. on techniques of nonviolent resistance.

**It's Elementary****Magdalen Hsu-Li**

**1970-present:** A bisexual Chinese-American singer-songwriter, painter, speaker, poet and activist. She founded Chickpop Records.

**It's Elementary****Add Your Own****It's Elementary****Add Your Own****It's Elementary****Add Your Own****It's Elementary****Add Your Own****It's Elementary**

# NOTES:

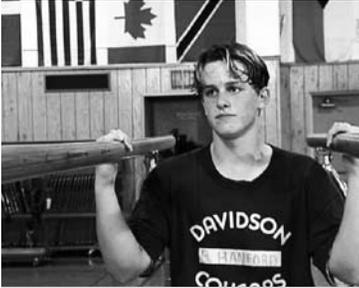


A series of horizontal lines for writing notes, consisting of 20 evenly spaced lines extending across the page.

## Lesson 8:

# INVESTIGATING ANTI-LGBT TEASING

### Grades 6-8



#### Goals

- Explore how and why students use anti-LGBT slurs.
- Explore the effect of anti-LGBT slurs on entire student body.
- Discuss teasing of boys being or seeming “too feminine” and girls being or seeming “too masculine.”
- Discuss students who consider suicide and what to do in such situations.

#### Objectives

- Students will conduct basic survey data collection.
- Students will convert whole numbers to percentages.
- Students will demonstrate use of graphic displays for presenting statistical information.
- Students will identify anti-LGBT slurs and name-calling when used by peers and adults.
- Students will explain how anti-LGBT teasing is hurtful and harmful to others.

#### Time Required

This lesson can be done over three 40-minute periods. The third session is based upon student work done outside the classroom. It is recommended that teachers allow for one to two days between session two and the final session for students to complete their survey assignment.

#### Materials

**Let's Get Real** film (part of The Respect For All Project), newspaper or magazine article with pie chart or bar graph, butcher paper or poster board, markers or colored pencils.

Let's  
Get Real

Photos in this lesson are from **Let's Get Real** another Respect For All Project film.



### Teaching Tip

This lesson is based on a clip from ***Let's Get Real***. For the purpose of this lesson you will only be using Chapter Six of the film, which focuses on anti-LGBT teasing and name-calling. It is recommended that early in the school year you show the entire film to place anti-LGBT bullying in a broader context. It will be helpful to have basic vocabulary and definitions available for students during this discussion to avoid unnecessary or unintended use of hurtful language. (See Vocabulary Guide in the Appendix on page 121 of this guide.) It is also important to set ground rules for your discussion and refer back to those ground rules as necessary. Finally, the subject of suicide is raised in the film and it is important that teachers spend some time reviewing school procedures and local resources for supporting students who may feel concerned about this issue or need help and support. See page 100 for more guidance on addressing suicide with youth.

Showing the film in its entirety can be an extension to this lesson, and would require additional planning and preparation. For more guidance see the ***Let's Get Real*** curriculum guide.

### Pre-Teaching

In this lesson students will be asked to reflect on the use of anti-LGBT slurs and teasing that they have experienced or observed. They will then be asked to investigate the impact of this behavior on their peers. Before beginning the lesson find a pie chart or bar graph in a popular newspaper or magazine that presents social demographics or survey results. Talk briefly about how the visual representations help people understand information with more ease and efficiency than a list of numbers. Discuss the use of percentages as a helpful way to communicate results in graphical presentations. Let students know that they are going to work as researchers or investigators on a topic that can be reported on in this way.



## Discussion Starters: THINK-PAIR-SHARE

---

**Use of anti-gay/anti-lesbian slurs.** Show Chapter Six of *Let's Get Real* to the entire class. After you show the clip, engage the students in the discussion topics below.

How many of you have heard people calling each other “gay,” “queer,” “lesbian,” “faggot” or “dyke” at this school? In the film, Brian talks about people referring to everything from people to pencils as “gay” as a common put down. Stephen says he uses the word faggot because it “gets to” the target faster. How is the word gay used at this school? Why do people use anti-gay or anti-lesbian slurs? Think about what Carlos said about how his stepfather called him “gay” when he wasn’t acting “manly”.

In the film, students explain that anti-LGBT slurs are used to mean different things. Ask your students what they think people are really saying when they call someone “gay,” “dyke,” “lesbian,” “homo,” “fag” or “bisexual.” Do they mean, “I think you are romantically attracted to a person of the same sex”? If not, what do they really mean? (Some examples might be they think the person is ugly, weak, uncool or they just want to make someone mad.)

**Acting “too” masculine or feminine.** Students in the film talk about boys being feminine or girls wearing baggy jeans and sports jackets. Why does this cause bullying? Does this mean that boys considered “too feminine” or girls considered “too masculine” are gay or lesbian? What is a gender stereotype? How might gender stereotypes be harmful?

**Effect of anti-gay slurs.** How does anti-gay name-calling and bullying affect people who are or may be gay? How might it affect someone who is not gay? What kind of toll do you think it takes on a person to be called “faggot” all day long in his ear? How did it affect Brian? When Brian’s friends tried to step in, they were harassed and called “gay” as well. Why do some students harass people who try to intervene? What would be an effective way for friends to step in without becoming targets themselves?

**Suicide.** How would you feel if you found out that someone who had been picked on ended up hurting himself or herself or committing suicide? How do you know if people who say they are going to kill themselves are serious? Why would someone think of committing suicide? If you know someone who wants to commit suicide or if you are thinking of it yourself, what can you do?

For more information about addressing suicide, go to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website at [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org).



**Investigating and Reporting Data.** Have students conduct an in-school survey to count the number of times they hear anti-LGBT slurs at school. The period for the survey can be modified from a full day to just one class period or location such as the lunchroom. You can utilize the survey form found on page 102 of this guide, or design your own with the help of the students.

After they collect data individually, ask students to discuss their results as a group (be sure to refer back to your discussion guidelines before you begin). Ask students to:

1. Assess what they think the person using the slurs was really trying to communicate.
2. Calculate the average number of slurs per day.
3. Count the number of times another student or teacher intervened.

After the discussion and group instruction, ask students to report their findings in the form of a pie chart or bar graph. Students should be instructed to display the results on poster board or butcher paper that is large enough to share with others or to be displayed in the classroom or on a school bulletin board. Students should label their chart with accurate titles and with a reference to the location, time and date that the survey was conducted (e.g. "Lunchroom at Smith Jr. High School 12 pm-1 pm 4/12/08")

Ask students to reflect upon the ways that they could be allies to those who are being targeted with anti-LGBT name-calling and harassment.



### TEACHING NOTES

#### Extension Activity

Have the students work in groups to write a report of their findings for a school newsletter or bulletin. The article could include a pie chart or graphical presentation of their findings.

On a bulleting board or chart paper have students list strategies for becoming allies (e.g. interrupt name-calling, report acts of injustice to a trusted adult). Add one new strategy each week over the course of an entire semester.

Credit: This lesson was excerpted from GroundSpark, The Respect For All Project, **Let's Get Real** Curriculum Guide



# Handout

## Survey: What's Going On At Our School?

Place a check (✓) next to the things people get bullied or harassed about at our school.

Put a star (\*) next to the ones that you think happen the most or are the most serious at our school.

From the *Let's Get Real* Curriculum Guide © GroundSpark, The Respect For All Project

Reason	✓ or *
Their race or color (or what someone thought their race was)	
Being a lighter or darker skin tone compared to others	
Being from another country	
Speaking with an accent	
Being new to this city/school	
Their mental or physical disability (or a disability someone though they had)	
Their religion (or what religion someone thought they were)	
Their clothes	
How much money their family has	
Being in special education	
Getting good grades/doing well in school	
Getting bad grades/not doing well in school	
Being overweight	
Not being popular	
Boys making comments about girls' bodies	
Girls making comments about boys' bodies	
Being a boy who "acts like a girl"	
Being called a bad word related to being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender	
Their age (being younger)	
Being smaller or not being good at sports	
Other:	
Other:	

1. Are there different groups of students at our school (*circle one*) YES NO If so, what are they?

2. Which groups have conflicts with other groups?

3. If you were in charge, what would you do to stop what you have notices above?

## Lesson 9:

# NONVIOLENT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND BEING AN ALLY

### Grades 6-8

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*There are many ways topics related to LGBT people can be integrated into existing curricula. Most elementary and middle schools teach units about the civil rights movement in the United States. However, the role of Bayard Rustin, an openly gay man and a central figure in the civil rights movement, is rarely talked about. The following activities help students make connections between Rustin's commitment to non-violence and the courage of allies. This lesson is one example of how existing curricular topics and skill areas can easily be modified or extended to make lessons LGBT-inclusive.*

#### Goals

- Students will increase their understanding of allies in social movements.
- Students will increase their understanding of non-violent protest.

#### Objectives

- Students will be able to define Jim Crow Laws.
- Students will identify how participants in the mainstream civil rights movement were supportive of the work of Bayard Rustin, an openly gay man.
- Students will consider how non-violent protest is currently relevant to contemporary democratic participation.

#### Time Required

Two 30-minute classes or one 60-minute class.

#### Materials Needed

Copies of the two handouts on pages 106 and 107 of this guide.

#### Pre Teaching

Review a timeline of African-American history before beginning this lesson. Make sure that you spend some time discussing key legal and political developments that unfolded in the struggle to establish full civil rights for African-Americans. This discussion should include the concept of segregation, integration, citizenship and the related concepts of de facto segregation and du jure segregation.

#### ACTIVITY 1: Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow

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##### Discussion Before Reading Handout #1

- Ask students what they know about Jim Crow Laws.
- Ask students what they know about how non-violence was used to protest these laws.





- Lead a short discussion to help students make a distinction between reacting passively and reacting with non-violent protest.
- To further clarify, ask students to imagine that a white person at a restaurant refused to serve food to a black person. Have the group brainstorm passive responses, violent responses and responses that reflect a non-violent strategy. Ask them which of these responses they think would have been most effective and which would have involved the most risk.
- Tell students they will be reading an article based on an essay by Bayard Rustin, a key person in the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States. While reading the article, ask them to pay attention to how Rustin used nonviolence and whether they think he was effective and what kind of risks he took to live up to the principals of nonviolence.

### After Reading the Article

#### Vocabulary Words

condoning	deviate
remonstrated	predicament
realization	resistance

### Discussion Questions

- What were all the incidents of violence to which Rustin responded?
- Were his responses nonviolent or passive? Why?
- Did his responses put him at great risk?
- Who did Rustin have an impact on by using nonviolent strategies? Would his impact have been the same if he used violent or passive strategies?
- Why do you think Rustin said, to the man who tried to protect him, "Thank you, but there is no need to do that. I do not wish to fight. I am protected well."
- Why do you think Rustin ask the police officer to spell a word he already knew?
- What was the significance of being called "Mister?"

### ACTIVITY 2: Black and Gay in the Civil Rights Movement

---

In all movements for social justice, people who are discriminated against have been joined by people who are not the target of discrimination to fight for justice. People who stand up for others are often thought of as allies. In the context of the civil rights movement we often hear about white allies who were willing to fight for the civil rights of African-American people. However, the short passage we are going to read explains how a handful of courageous heterosexual African-American activists were allies to Bayard Rustin, who was targeted not only for being African-American, but also for being gay.

## After Reading Handout #2

### Discussion Questions

- Did anything surprise you about this article? If so, what and why?
- Why do you think that Strom Thurmond wanted to make an issue of Bayard Rustin being gay and a Communist?
- Are there any questions you would want to ask A. Phillip Randolph?
- Reread Randolph's statement to the press. What made this statement effective? If students do not identify the following points, ask them to consider them:
  - » Randolph spoke for a diverse coalition of groups.
  - » Randolph did not debate the morality of either homosexuality or communism.
  - » Randolph expressed unwavering support for Rustin.
- What lessons can you take from this article and the one we read previously about Rustin?



### TEACHING NOTES Extension Activities

- Ask students to brainstorm situations in which they currently believe that people are treated unjustly. Lead a discussion about who cares about these issues, who is standing up for people who are being treated unjustly and what students can do. Ask whether the practice of non-violence could be used to change any of the situations they described.
- Ask students to read more about Bayard Rustin and other practitioners of nonviolence, including Mahatmas Gandhi, Cesar Chavez and Henry Thoreau. Two books about Bayard Rustin have been written for students. They are:

*No Easy Answers: Bayard Rustin And The Civil Rights Movement* by Calvin Craig Miller. (2005) Morgan Reynolds Publishing.

*Bayard Rustin: Behind the Scenes of the Civil Rights Movement* by James Haskins. (1996) Hyperion. (Out of print but available many places online.)
- Ask students to think of a time that they stood up for something that they believed in or stood up for another person. Have them meet in small groups to talk about: What they did, why they did it and how it felt.
- Ask students to think about the ways someone's sexual orientation or gender expression can be used to discredit their contributions. Have them write a paper on why this is unjust and identify ways to address this when it happens and what they can do to prevent this from happening.
- Ask students to find a newspaper article of a current situation that reflects a similar struggle for civil rights. Ask them to write a letter to the editor as an ally in support of the groups efforts to gain equal rights.



### Teaching Tip

Discuss the historical changes in the way we talk about people with same sex attraction. In the past the term homosexual was more commonly used but today the terms lesbian and gay are preferred. Similarly the term Negro was commonly used in the past but today the term Black or African-American are preferred.

# HANDOUT #1

## Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow

*From an essay by Bayard Rustin in the book: Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin. Edited by Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise. Cleis Press, San Francisco. 2003.*

*In an essay written in 1942, Bayard Rustin wrote about a bus ride he took from Louisville, Kentucky to Nashville, Tennessee. At that time, according to laws called Jim Crow laws, it was legal to require African-American people to move to the back of the bus so that white people could sit in the front of the bus. Rustin challenged these laws at a time when doing so could have cost him his life. This was 14 years before Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of a bus and ignited the Montgomery Bus Strike.*

*Rustin's account of this trip illustrates how he used nonviolent strategies. These strategies were at the heart of the civil rights movement and it was Rustin who inspired many—including Martin Luther King, Jr.—to commit to nonviolence. King considered him a mentor in this regard.*

When Rustin began his bus trip, he sat in the front of the bus and the driver, with harsh and violent language, ordered him to move to the back of the bus. Rustin responded:

"My friend I believe that is an unjust law. If I were to sit in the back I would be condoning injustice."

Rustin refused to move and after the bus went a few more stops a police car and two motorcycles pulled up alongside the vehicle. Four policemen got on board, threatened Rustin, and told him to move. Rustin said he responded quietly:

"I believe that I have the right to sit here. If I sit in the back of the bus I am depriving that child [a five- or six-year-old white child] of the knowledge that there is injustice here, which I believe it is his right to know. It is my sincere conviction that the power of love in the world is the greatest power existing. If you have a greater power, my friend, you may move me."

Rustin described what followed:

"How much they understood of what I was trying to tell them I do not know. By this time they were impatient and angry. As I would not move, they began to beat me about the head and shoulders, and I shortly found myself knocked to the floor. Then they dragged me out of the bus and continued to kick and beat me.

"Knowing that if I tried to get up or protect myself in the first heat of their anger they would construe it as an attempt to resist and beat me down again, I forced myself to be still and wait for their kicks, one after another. Then I stood up, spreading out my arms parallel to the ground, and said, 'There is no need to beat me. I am not resisting you.'

"At this, three white men, obviously Southerners by their speech, got out of the bus and remonstrated the police. Indeed, as one of the policemen raised his club to strike me, one of them, a little fellow, caught hold of it and said, 'Don't you do that!' A second policeman raised his club to strike the little man, and I stepped between them, facing the man and said, 'Thank you, but there is no need to do that. I do not wish to fight. I am protected well.'"

"An elderly gentleman, well dressed and also a Southerner asked the police where they were taking me. They said 'Nashville.' 'Don't worry son,' he said to me. 'I'll be there to see that you get justice.'"

In the car ride, Rustin was writing something in the back seat. While doing this he said he caught the eye of the young policeman in the front seat. Rustin said the officer looked away quickly, which Rustin said gave him, "renewed courage from the realization that [the officer] could not meet my eyes because he was aware of the injustice being done. I began to write again, and after a moment I leaned forward and touched him on the shoulder. 'My friend,' I said, 'how do you spell [the word] difference?'" Rustin asked this question even though he knew how to spell the word.

When Rustin got to Nashville, he saw the elderly gentleman who had earlier told him that he would see to it that he got justice. Rustin and the police officers met with the assistant district attorney. The police told their version of the story in a way that Rustin said included outright lies. When asked to tell his side of the story Rustin directed his response to the police officer who had not been able to meet his eyes:

"'Gladly,' I said, 'and I want you,' turning to the young policeman who had sat in the front seat. 'to follow what I say and stop me if I deviate from the truth in the least.'

"Holding his eyes with mine, I told the story exactly as it had happened, stopping often to say, 'Is that right?' or 'Isn't that what happened?' to the young policeman. During the whole time he never once interrupted me, and when I was through I said, 'Did I tell the truth just as it happened? And he said, 'Well. . .'

"Then [the assistant district attorney] dismissed me, and I went to wait alone in a dark room. After an hour, he came in and said, very kindly, 'You may go Mister Rustin.'

"I left the courthouse, believing strongly in the nonviolent approach. I am certain that I was addressed as 'Mister' (as no Negro is ever addressed in the South), that I was assisted by those three men, and the elderly gentleman interested himself in my predicament because I had, without fear, faced the four policeman and said, 'There is no need to beat me. I offer you no resistance.'"

## HANDOUT #2

### Black And Gay In The Civil Rights Movement

*Based on an interview with Bayard Rustin in the book: Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin. Edited by Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise. Cleis Press, San Francisco. 2003.*

Bayard Rustin was open about being a gay man when very few people were open about being lesbian or gay. He had been arrested in 1953 because of an encounter with another man. Rustin had also been a communist from 1938–1941. At the time many people joined the Communist Party because they thought this political party would help end inequalities between rich and poor people. A number of times in his career, Rustin’s sexual orientation and his association with communists were used against him and the civil rights movement. In a 1987 interview, Rustin described how this happened right before the famous 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington. In this interview, he recalled how A. Phillip Randolph, one of the most prominent African-American leaders of the civil rights movement, stood up for him:

*In June of 1963, Senator Strom Thurmond stood in the Congress and denounced the March on Washington because I was organizing it. He called me a communist, a sexual pervert, a draft dodger, etc. The next day Mr. A. Phillip Randolph called all the black leaders and said, “I want to answer Strom Thurmond’s attack. But I think we ought not to get involved in a big discussion of homosexuality or communism or draft dodging. What I want to do, with the approval of all the black leaders is to issue a statement which says, ‘We the black leaders of the civil rights movement and the leaders of the trade union movement and the leaders of the Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic church which are organizing this march, have absolute confidence in Bayard Rustin’s ability, his integrity, and his commitment to nonviolence as the best way to bring about social change. He will continue to organize the March with our full and undivided support.’”*

*Someone came to Mr. Randolph once and said, “Do you know that Bayard Rustin is a homosexual? Do you know he was been arrested in California? I don’t know how you could have anyone who is a homosexual working for you.” Mr. Randolph said, “Well, well, if Bayard is a homosexual, is that talented—and I know the work he does for me—maybe I should be looking for somebody else homosexual who could be so useful.” Mr. Randolph was such a completely honest person who wanted everyone else to be honest. Had anyone said to him, “Mr. Randolph, do you think I should openly admit that I am homosexual? His attitude, I am sure, would have been, “Although such an admission may cause you problems, you will be happier in the long run.” Because his idea was that you have to be who you are.*

Martin Luther King, Jr. also recognized Rustin’s tremendous skill as an organizer and wanted him to be involved in organizing the March on Washington.



# 6

## **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SAFE SCHOOL POLICIES**



## Voices Of Change

**Samira Abdul-Karim**

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### **From *It's Elementary***

"I mostly get it [ideas about gays and lesbians] from my parents, and my aunts and uncles. Because they're always talking about, saying it's wrong, and you shouldn't do it. But I think it's just the way a person is. You can't really change it."

### **From *It's STILL Elementary***

"[Our teacher] made it really easy for us all to talk about these things and to create an environment where we didn't feel awkward asking questions and we didn't feel like we were being offensive, or being hurtful, but just telling us, telling her, what we thought."

One of my best friends came out to me and I realized how oppressive an environment can be when your identity is being negated. I felt that, also, racially and I feel that often. So, I can relate to her experience that way. And so together we started a Gay-Straight Alliance at my school, recognizing that we all are faced with something that causes us to have to fight constantly just to be comfortable."

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**Samira Abdul-Karim, a fourth-grader in *It's Elementary*; a student at Wesleyan University in *It's STILL Elementary*.**

# CREATING SAFE SCHOOLS

**“What’s the big whoop?”** This realization, that gay and lesbian people are part of the human family, seems like common sense to so many of the students featured in *It’s Elementary*. These bold expressions of understanding and respect offer hope and inspiration to anyone who wants to take action and work for more inclusive and welcoming schools. Thousands of educators and concerned adults across the United States have worked over several years to make their schools and communities more welcoming and safe places for LGBT people. They are everyday people who have worked with allies at the local, state and national level to make the case that talking about LGBT issues in schools is not a luxury but a necessary part of education that promotes respect and generates more productive learning environments. They are parents, teachers, religious leaders and sometimes superintendents.

**Making elementary schools more inclusive of LGBT issues and people is not a simple, one-step process.** It is important to reflect upon this point before embarking upon your own efforts to work for change. First, it involves negotiating a number of different perspectives from teachers, parents and school administrators. Negotiating different perspectives on LGBT-inclusive education requires that all involved in the decision-making processes have the opportunity to listen to each other and express their concerns in a fair and respectful manner.

**Working to create LGBT-inclusive schools is easier when you are familiar with the legal issues and state policies related to the establishment of safe and welcoming schools.** It requires more than just the passion to make change; it also requires a willingness to develop an effective strategy to accomplish that change. Part of that strategy includes being familiar with related legal issues and policies on LGBT-inclusive educational practices and working with allies to determine those that apply to your particular situation.

**Since the release of *It’s Elementary* in 1996, several states across the nation have taken steps towards creating more welcoming and inclusive schools.** While there is still no federal law that addresses LGBT-inclusive education many states have implemented comprehensive safe schools legislation that specifically names sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as protected categories. Legislation and state law can serve as powerful incentives for schools and school districts to take active steps towards preventing bias-based bullying and harassment—especially anti-LGBT motivated harassment. These mandates and protections offer students and their families some powerful legal tools for making schools and school districts safer. During this same period of increased safe schools legislation, there have also been a handful of major court rulings related to LGBT-inclusive education that can offer guidance to schools and school districts in their own decision making today. The following examples are ways to answer frequently asked questions based on recent court rulings. It is important to check your state laws and district policies.



## It's True

In 1990 only two Gay Straight Alliances (GSA's) existed. In 2001 there were 1000. And in 2007 the number of GSA's grew to over 3,700. The presence of GSA's has been attributed to decreased anti-gay bullying, and increased physical safety of LGBT students.

*GLSEN press release, GLSEN Releases Research Brief Showing Benefits of Gay-Straight Alliances, 2007*

# It's The Law Or Is It?

## Common Legal Concerns

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### Court Ruling

While parents have a right to direct the upbringing of their children, that right does not extend to directing what a school teaches.

*U.S. District Court of Massachusetts*

**“Talking about gay issues in my child’s classroom is against my religion and a violation of my parental rights.”**

In 2006, the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts ruled in favor of the Lexington Public Schools’ (*Parker v. Hurley*) support of the school’s right to include LGBT-related curricular materials in their K-5 elementary schools despite objections by some parents that such instruction was at odds with their religious beliefs.

The lawsuit was prompted by the inclusion of three books that include gay- and lesbian-headed families. The first book, *Who’s in a Family* (1997), which illustrates different kinds of families, including those headed by gay and lesbian parents, was included in the district diversity book bag program and in classroom reading centers. In addition, the book *Molly’s Family* (2004), which tells the story of a child with parents of the same gender, is available in the school reading center. Finally, the book *King and King* (2002), which tells a story of two princes who fall in love and live happily ever after together, was read aloud during class time.

In this case, two sets of parents sought to prevent the school district from teaching about lesbian and gay people and their families without having the opportunity to “opt out” their children of such lessons. The plaintiffs held strong religious beliefs that homosexuality is immoral and that marriage is a union between a different-sex couple.

They also asserted that the school district violated the Fourteenth Amendment by interfering with their right to direct the upbringing of their children and the free exercise clause of the First Amendment by interfering with their religious beliefs.

On February 23, 2007, the district court ruled in favor of the school district. The court dismissed the plaintiffs’ federal claims. Recognizing that there is binding precedent on point, *Brown v. Hot, Sexy and Safer Productions*, 68 F.3d 525, 1st Cir. 1995. The court ruled that while parents have a right to direct the upbringing of their children, that right does not extend to directing what a school teaches. The court ruled that preparing students for citizenship in a diverse society and fostering an environment in which lesbian and gay students can learn are sufficient justifications for implementing LGBT-inclusive curriculum. With respect to any violation of parents rights, the court ruled that the school’s action was not a violation of parent rights.

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### It's True

As of 2007, California, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, and New Jersey all have comprehensive safe schools legislation that includes protection for students on the basis of sexual orientation and gender expression.

## **“Does our school have to offer an opt-out policy to parents when we implement LGBT-inclusive lessons?”**

Referring again to the Lexington case, the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts also found no right for parents to demand an “opt-out” policy during the LGBT-inclusive instructional activities. The court noted that parents can choose to remove their children from the school district, but they may not “opt out” from instruction at will. Many teachers also express concern that by not including all students in LGBT-inclusive lessons, schools run the risk of conveying a message that it is somehow acceptable to engage in hurtful and disrespectful behavior when it relates to LGBT people.

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## **“Do students have the right to voluntarily “opt out” of LGBT-inclusive instructional activities related to safe schools policies?”**

In some states safe schools laws and policies provide an opportunity for curriculum and instruction on preventing discrimination, bias and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender expression. These policies often require that schools utilize instructional time to address diversity and school safety. In the process of doing so, students and some parents have expressed opposition to the LGBT content of such instruction on the grounds that it violates their free speech rights.

In 2006, the U.S. District Court of Eastern Kentucky heard arguments on this challenge in *Morrison v. Boyd County Kentucky, Board of Education*. In this case students and staff were required to attend a series of diversity training sessions that included content on sexual orientation. The court ruled that even though the plaintiffs held religious beliefs that did not accept homosexuality they could not “opt out” of school instruction that was offered as part of compliance with anti-harassment and safe schools policies.

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## **“Is talking about gay issues the same as sex education?”**

Talking about gay and lesbian people and history as well as addressing bias-based bullying is not the same as talking about sex or human reproduction. A number of states have laws that explicitly mandate guidelines for discussions related to reproduction and/or sexual behavior. Those laws do not apply to discussions of gay and lesbian people as part of age-appropriate lessons in social studies, language arts, math and other subjects not designated as sex education.

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### **Court Ruling**

While students and staff have a right to respectfully express their beliefs, that right does not guarantee a right to “opt out” of instruction that is in conflict with those privately held beliefs.

*U.S. District Court of Eastern Kentucky*



### **From The Film**

In the film, a middle school social studies class hosts a panel of gay and lesbian speakers who are asked inappropriate questions about sexual activity. The panelists appropriately respond to the students by clarifying that questions about sexual behavior are not part of the discussion.



### **Court Ruling**

While schools have a right to include LGBT content within the curriculum, the inclusion of such content must not violate the free speech rights of any single group or individual in the process.

*U.S. District Court of Maryland*

## **“Can a student express religious views on LGBT issues that may be different from those offered by the school?”**

Another common legal conflict related to LGBT-inclusive instruction is the concern over limiting the free speech of any one group at the expense of another. As was made clear in the *Lexington* case, schools have the right to set the instructional curriculum regardless of parental opposition to content. However, schools must not limit the free speech rights of students and families who oppose a particular topic within a curriculum.

In 2005, a grassroots organization known as Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum (CRC) partnered with Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX) to bring legal charges against the Montgomery County Public Schools of Maryland for distributing and utilizing teaching materials that included a negative portrayal of those who hold strong religious beliefs against homosexuality.

On May 5, 2005, the U.S. District Court of Maryland ruled that the school district overstepped its bounds when it tried to incorporate curriculum content that characterized those who held Christian beliefs against homosexuality as “wrong,” “intolerant” or “misinformed.” It is important to note that while a school can choose to incorporate LGBT-inclusive content it must not violate the free speech of others in the process. Those who hold religious beliefs against homosexuality must be allowed to voice their opinion in a respectful manner and must not be coerced from doing so.

This means that students can respectfully express their disagreement with an idea or concept during classroom instruction without fear of recourse from the school or school district. However, that expression must be respectful and must not violate the safety of another student in the process.

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## “Can a teacher disclose his or her sexual orientation to students?”

In 1998, a teacher and coach for the Nebo Unified School District in Utah disclosed her sexual orientation in response to a direct question by a student as to whether or not she was a lesbian. As a result of this disclosure, the teacher was threatened with disciplinary action for discussing her sexual orientation with a student. At the same time, no other teacher in the School District was prohibited from discussing his or her sexual orientation. The U.S. District Court of Central Utah ruled that because no similar restriction was placed on heterosexual teachers at all, there was evidence that the School District wanted to silence her speech because of its expected pro-homosexual viewpoint. Such viewpoint-based restriction was found to be a violation of her constitutional rights.

The court ruled that as a matter of fairness and evenhandedness, homosexuals should not be sanctioned or restricted for speech that heterosexuals are not likewise sanctioned or restricted for. Because the School District has not restricted other teachers in speaking about their sexual orientation, the School District was found to have not only violated the First Amendment, but also the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause.

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### Court Ruling

A school or school district cannot limit the public speech of teachers and staff, even if that speech includes the disclosure of their sexual orientation.

*U.S. District Court of Central Utah*

# The Importance Of Working Effectively With School Administrators And School Boards

While teachers, parents, guidance counselors and even principals can take the lead in bringing LGBT-inclusive instruction and policies to a school or school district, the decision making power of superintendents and school boards must be considered and their support must be secured. It is easy to become embroiled in the frustrations and tensions that can emerge. However, these frustrations can be minimized if the process is approached with a sense of both commitment and respect for those who currently make decisions within a school district.

It is best to approach a school board as a deliberating body that has an obligation to listen to community members and to act on reasonable requests for policy change. There are examples from across the country where superintendents and school board members have been champions of LGBT-inclusive instruction and policies in schools. School board meetings offer a venue for making the case that addressing LGBT-inclusive instruction and policies are part of ensuring a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students. It is important to approach this work with respect. Submit formal communications to board members, and avoid making demands or threats. Make clear requests framed by reasonable arguments and rationale for consideration. Organizing a screening of *It's Elementary* can be a first step in working towards this change and can help a superintendent and school board members better understand the importance of LGBT-inclusive instruction and policies in schools.

## Ten Tips To Consider

### Identify Key Leaders

In addition to School Board members and the district Superintendent, there are often other individuals in leadership positions who play key roles in supporting efforts to ensure that schools are safe for all. Such individuals might include Associate or Assistant Superintendents, Directors of Curriculum, Training and Development, leaders of teachers unions and professional associations.

### Keep Your Leaders Informed

Because school administrators have many responsibilities to manage, they might not be as well versed on laws, codes, policies and best practices related to safe schools efforts. It is helpful, and often appreciated, to receive such information. Consider creating packets of summarized information, highlighting key points, regarding relevant laws and education codes. It is also important to make sure school leaders are periodically updated. You might want to ask for ten minutes on an agenda of a principals meeting to ensure site administrators have the most recent information.

### Support Your Leaders

Keep in mind that creating respectful school environments is a community effort. As a member of the community, be visible in supporting leadership. Attend School Board meetings, provide resources to administrators, invite other community members to attend as well.

### Integrate the Work into the District's Mission

School districts have mission statements that are generally broad in scope, encompassing school climate and safety for all. In addition, many have values statements that also reflect the nature of the work being done. At the beginning of each school year the district goals are announced to all administrators, teachers and staff. Whenever possible, integrate a safe schools effort into the district's mission, values, policies and goals. For example, when the focus of the school year's objectives is to close the achievement gap, help to draw the link between respectful school climate and student achievement.

## Emphasize that the Work is not “Extra”

One of the challenges of introducing new material into a district is addressing the concern that more work would be added to over-extended staff. Emphasizing that building communities of respect and ensuring safety for all is neither “new” nor “extra.” In fact, it is what schools currently are required to do. The material is not an expectation that staff have additional work to do, but rather resources to support them to perform their responsibilities more effectively.

## Prepare Responses to Challenging Questions

It is often not difficult to anticipate what negative reactions a district might receive when introducing material that has created controversy elsewhere. One of the best tools to assist school leadership in addressing negative reactions is to help them be prepared. Consider creating a handout that provides sample responses, for example, to the erroneous claim that discussing sexual orientation is the same as having a conversation about sexual behavior. (See handout on page 12 in this guide.)

## Network With Other Districts

It is important to remember that this work is not new, even if it has been newly introduced to your district. There is no need to recreate the wheel when much good work has been done in other districts. Speak with administrators, Board Members, educators and community members outside of your district as a way to learn from their valuable experiences, both positive and challenging.



## Resources Online

Model anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies can be found on the schools portion of the ACLU's "Get Busy, Get Equal" website at [www.aclu.org/getequal](http://www.aclu.org/getequal).

Visit the Safe Schools Coalition website for more information on safe schools work being done all over the country. [www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)

## Model Inclusiveness

When addressing controversial issues, especially in the face of hostile individuals or audiences, it can be challenging to remain calm. Remember that part of the overall goal of our work is to create a more inclusive community, especially for those who historically have been excluded. An important way to demonstrate the value of including all is to allow for the expression of diverse points of view, even when you disagree with the content.

## Hold All Accountable to Respectful Dialogue

Should conflict and dissent arise as a result of discussing these materials, ensure that district leadership will hold all school community members to guidelines of respect. Most every classroom, if not school, has rules for students regarding respectful behavior. If we expect students to adhere to such guidelines, we must also hold adults accountable. Disagreement is OK, disrespect is not.

## Maintain Your Values

Remain mindful that our work is about creating respectful learning environments where every member of the school community is safe. In the face of opposition, do not compromise these important values. Have confidence in school policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment.



# 7

## APPENDIX



## Voices Of Change

**Emily Rosen-King**

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### **From *It's Elementary***

"My mothers mean so so so so so much to me. I have two mothers. Two moms is pretty nice. Well, it's more than pretty nice, it's really nice. You can't imagine. Although having two mothers is a problem to others, I respect that that's the way they think, and I can't do anything about it. I still think that those people think stupidly...I am proud of my moms and enjoy marching in the Gay Pride March every single year with my moms."

### **From *It's STILL Elementary***

"I remember the day that they came to film, it was very exciting, I wore a little dress and earrings and it was a big deal. I knew they were filming something that it was going to be used for this movie that would later be shown to lots of people.

Really, it was just about winning these cookies, and I really didn't realize that what I was saying was actually very important to say in front of a class."

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**Emily Rosen-King, a fourth-grader in *It's Elementary*; a college student at Wesleyan University in *It's STILL Elementary*.**



# Vocabulary Guide—Building A Common Language

*Reprinted with permission from the Welcoming Schools Guide (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project*

When children ask questions, they want simple and direct answers. Don't answer more than they asked for. You might choose to answer a child's question with another question in order to figure out what the child is asking. Additionally, do not give answers you aren't comfortable with—using your own words will seem more genuine. It is also helpful to use examples; they usually help students understand definitions. For instance: "Prejudice is when someone dislikes everyone who is African-American just because their skin is black, or dislikes lesbians because they are women who love women."

As an educator or parent, when you have to answer questions or handle something that is new, you may fall back on what you learned about something when you were younger. However, since there has been so much silence around gay and lesbian people, especially at the elementary level, people are often at a loss for what to say. These simple definitions are a place to start to help you find the words.

This list of definitions is not here to say that you should define all of these words for students. However, if the need arises, these definitions will give you a place to start. There are three sets of definitions: one for grades K–3, one for grades 4–5, and one for educators, parents/guardians and high school students.



## Grades K-3

**Gay:** Being gay means that a person loves, in a very special way, someone who is the same gender. A gay man loves or wants to be involved with another gay man. A gay person might choose to have a special relationship with someone and share their home and have a family together. (Keep it simple. Focus on relationships and family.)

**Bullying:** When you are trying to be mean to someone else by hitting, using mean words or by not letting them play—especially if you do it over and over again and it is done by someone larger, older or more popular.

**Homosexual:** Another word for “gay” or “lesbian.”

**Lesbian:** A woman who loves another woman in a very special way.

**Prejudice:** Not liking someone because they look a certain way or they belong to a particular group—like a certain religion.

**Stereotype:** An idea that all the people in one group behave the same way or have the same characteristics.

**Teasing:** Teasing can be playful if both people think it is funny. Playful teasing usually happens between good friends or family. But teasing can be mean and hurtful when you are making fun of someone. It can also be mean if you talk about things in a mean way that you know might hurt such as the color of their skin, their religion or if they are acting like a boy or a girl.

## Grades 4-5

**Bisexual:** A person who is romantically attracted to either a man or woman.

**Bullying:** When one person or a group of people is repeatedly and intentionally aggressive toward another person or tries to put another person down. This can be done physically, verbally or indirectly, such as through exclusion. It is usually done by someone larger, older or more popular.

**In the Closet or Closeted:** An expression that means a gay or lesbian person is hiding a part of who he or she is and not telling anyone about being gay or lesbian because he or she is afraid to do so. For example: someone who is gay might avoid saying who his or her partner is or who he or she really likes because that person is of the same gender.

**Coming Out:** When someone tells other people that they are gay or lesbian. When children tell other people that their parents are gay or lesbian.

**Dyke:** A slang term for “lesbian.” It is usually used as an insult. However, you may hear some lesbians use the word in a positive way to describe themselves.

**Fag:** A slang term for “gay.” It is usually used as an insult.

**Gay:** Men who are attracted to or have romantic relationship with men. Or, women who are attracted to or have romantic relationships with women. This word is sometimes used just to refer to men. Women who are gay are also called “lesbians.” A gay person might choose to have a special relationship with someone and share their home and have a family together.

**GLBT:** Initials that stand for “gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.” Also abbreviated as “LGBT.”

**Heterosexual:** A person who is romantically attracted to a person of the other sex. In other words, a man who is attracted to women or a woman who is attracted to men.

**Homophobia:** Putting down or thinking less of people because they *are* gay or lesbian or because you *think* they are gay and lesbian. (Note: actually means fear of gay or lesbian people and fear for being gay oneself.)

**Homosexual:** Another word for “gay” or “lesbian.” Usually used in medical or scientific references.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to or has romantic relationships with women.

**Outing:** Telling other people that someone is gay or lesbian when that person is not open about it and does not want other people to know.

**Prejudice:** A feeling or attitude about a person or group simply because the person or group belongs to a specific religion, race, nationality, etc. Usually a negative opinion formed before knowing all the facts.

**Queer:** A slang term for “gay” or “lesbian.” When it is used as an insult it is hurtful. More recently some people use it in a positive light to describe people who are lesbian or gay or who expand traditional gender roles.

**Sexual Orientation:** Everyone has a sexual orientation. A person’s sexual orientation is based on whether he or she is attracted to someone of a different sex, the same sex, or both sexes.

**Stereotype:** An idea that all the people in one group behave the same way or have the same characteristics.

**Straight:** Another word for “heterosexual.”

**Teasing:** Teasing can be playful if both people think that it is funny. Playful teasing usually happens between good friends or family. But teasing can become mean and hurtful if you are making fun of someone or you touch on sensitive issues such as race, body image or acting like a boy or a girl.

**Transgender:** Someone who on the outside might seem to be one gender but on the inside feels like the other gender. For example: a person who has the body of a man but deep inside feels like a woman.

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## Definitions Of Key Words For Educators, Parents/Guardians And High School Students

Often we are uncomfortable talking about something when we are not sure what things mean. These definitions are geared toward educators, parents and high school students. They are longer and more detailed than ones you would use with younger children. They may help you feel more comfortable and clear about the language.

For definitions in Spanish see “Glosario de Términos Lésbicos, Gay, Bisexuales y Transgéneros” by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, available at [www.glaad.org/espanol/guia/glosario.php](http://www.glaad.org/espanol/guia/glosario.php).

For definitions in Chinese see “Chinese-Language GLAAD Media Reference Guide,” available at [www.glaad.org/2007/2007PDFS/ChineseLanguageGLAADMediaReferenceGuide.pdf](http://www.glaad.org/2007/2007PDFS/ChineseLanguageGLAADMediaReferenceGuide.pdf).

**Anti-Discrimination Policy:** A policy that states clearly that bias or discrimination against a particular group will not be tolerated. This discrimination includes both actions and words. A comprehensive anti-discrimination policy should include both actual and perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Bi:** Short for *bisexual*.

**Bias:** Having thoughts or feelings, or displaying behaviors that assume people who are different from you or hold different ideas or beliefs are less worthy of equal rights and treatment.

**Bisexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of either sex.

**Bullying:** Bullying is aggressive behavior or intentional harm carried out by one or more people. Usually the target is less powerful. Bullying may be physical or verbal or use indirect means such as exclusion. Bullying is usually seen as repeated aggressive behavior, but people who are bullied feel the impact after even a few incidents.

**Co-Parent Adoption:** A family created by two adults both adopting a child. Often used in reference to two women or two men adopting a child.

**Coming Out:** The process of becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity, accepting it, acting on it and telling others. This process usually occurs over time and in stages. This process may occur in a different order depending on each individual.

**Discrimination:** An action that treats people unfairly. Denying equal treatment to individuals or groups of people.

**Dyke:** A derogatory term used to describe a lesbian or someone perceived as a lesbian—most often a woman who does not display traditionally feminine characteristics. For example, it may be used to insult a girl or woman who voices a strong opinion or one who is very good at sports. This term, when used outside of the LGBT community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term. Some lesbians have reclaimed the use of the word to refer to themselves in a strong, positive light.

**Faggot or Fag:** This word is considered offensive to gay males. A derogatory term used to describe a gay male or a male perceived as gay, especially one who does not display traditionally masculine characteristics. Also used as an insult when a man or boy does something considered unmanly.

**Gay:** A generic term used to describe both men and women who are sexually and romantically attracted to someone of the same sex. Sometimes used just to refer to gay men. It is also used as a derogatory slur to describe anything, anyone or any behavior that does not meet the approval of an individual or a given group.

**Gay Lifestyle:** An inaccurate term. There is no one gay lifestyle, just as there is no one heterosexual lifestyle. (Picture a young lesbian living in the city, two gay dads living in the suburbs, an older lesbian couple living on a farm—all very different lifestyles.)

**Gay Marriage:** Preferred phrases are equal marriage, marriage equality or marriage between same-sex couples. *Gay marriage* implies that it is something other than marriage—the legal civil marriage that is available to opposite-sex couples.

**GLBT and GLBTQ:** Acronym for *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual* and *Transgender*. The Q can stand for *Questioning* or *Queer*. The *Questioning* category is included to incorporate those that are not yet certain of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Also abbreviated as *LGBT* or *LGBTQ*.

**Gender Expression:** An individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal, deeply felt sense of being male, female or something other or in-between. This identity may or may not match the individual's biological sex.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** A person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**Gender Role:** The set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. These roles can vary from culture to culture.

**Harassment:** Behavior meant to frighten, taunt or defame someone. Harassment can be physical, verbal, social or emotional in nature. All forms are destructive and have personal consequences for the victims.

**Heterosexism:** The usually implicit assumption that heterosexuality is ideal, preferable to other sexual orientations and/or the only valid option.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the other sex.

**Homophobia:** Originally used to describe fear of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. More often today it is used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of LGBT people.

**Homosexual:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the same sex. This term is appropriate in medical or scientific contexts.

**In the Closet:** A LGBT person who is not open about the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender aspect of their identity.

**Intersex:** People born with varying degrees of the biological aspects of both biological males and biological females.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is sexually and romantically attracted to other women.

**LGBT and LGBTQ:** Acronym for *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender* (and *Queer/Questioning*). Also abbreviated as *GLBT* and *GLBTQ*.

**Out:** A term used to describe a LGBT person who is open about his or her sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This term comes from the expression “out of the closet,” which means being open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

**Outing:** Revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person, usually without that person’s consent.

**Prejudice:** A feeling or an attitude about a person or group simply because the person belongs to a specific religion, race, nationality, sexual orientation or other group.

**Pride (Day and/or March):** Short for *LGBT pride*. The term is commonly used to indicate the celebrations that happen every summer that commemorate the Stonewall Inn riots of 1969, which are regarded by many as the birth of the modern LGBT rights movement.

**Queer:** Historically a negative term for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. More recently reclaimed by younger LGBT people to refer to themselves. Often used to reference a more flexible view of gender and/or

sexuality. Some people still find the term offensive. Others use it as a more inclusive term that allows for more freedom of gender expression. Also used in academic fields, such as *queer studies* or *queer pedagogy*.

**Sexual Orientation:** An identity based on whether someone is attracted to a person of a different sex, the same sex or both sexes (*heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual*). Everyone has a sexual orientation.

**Sexual Preference:** Avoid using this term. *Preference* implies a simple choice of whether or not you like something—such as preferring apples to oranges. It also implies that one chooses to be LGBT. However, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, sexual orientation is not a choice. (“Sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic, hormonal and environmental influences. In recent decades, biologically based theories have been favored by experts...Sexual orientation is usually established during early childhood.” Barbara L. Frankowski & American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence, “Clinical Report: Sexual Orientation and Adolescents,” *PEDIATRICS*, June 2004 [pp. 1827-1832]).

**Stereotype:** An oversimplified idea or generalization about a group of people. Labeling an entire group based on the actions of some.

**Teasing:** Good-natured teasing generally involves a playful back-and-forth, is done with a friendly tone of voice or laughter, may be accompanied by affectionate gestures or expressions, can lighten a tense situation and does not lead to physical confrontations.

Hurtful teasing is more often accompanied by an angry or sarcastic tone of voice and angry body language, continues even when the person being teased does not like it and can feel like a put-down or being made fun of.

Good-natured teasing can cross into hurtful teasing or bullying depending on a number of factors, such as the relationship between the teased and the teaser, the feelings of the person being teased, the intent of the person doing the teasing and whether sensitive issues are touched on, such as race, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Trans:** Short for *transgender*.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. This term can include people who identify as transsexuals, cross-dressers, masculine-identified women, feminine-identified men, MTFs (Male to Female), FTMs (Female to Male) or intersex people.

**Transsexual:** An individual who does not identify with his or her biological sex. Transsexual people sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally.

**Two-Spirit:** When used historically, generally refers to Native Americans who displayed both feminine and masculine traits. These individuals were often highly respected as healers or leaders. Now, many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Native Americans use this term to refer to themselves.

# Film Synopsis

This synopsis provides a summary of the lesson ideas presented in the feature-length version of *It's Elementary* (78-minutes) and will be helpful if you are planning to show excerpts from the film.

## Chapter 1: Opening

A politician rages about “subjecting” children to education about gay and lesbian issues. Alternates with children expressing themselves openly. The director’s voice introduces the film.

*Duration: 3 minutes*

## Chapter 2: Brainstorm/Word Association

In a classroom series on stereotypes, the teacher invites children to write down words they associate with the words *gay* and *lesbian*. Shows the variety of ideas, questions and misconceptions young children have and the sources of their information. Interspersed with clips from television shows, sitcoms, movies and news reports. Includes an interview with a teacher explaining the importance of addressing stereotypes and making the distinction that the issue is not gay sex, but rather people, biases and discrimination.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 9 minutes*

## Chapter 3: The Word Web

A teacher begins a unit on gay issues using a standard elementary school technique for introducing a new subject. Calls on the children’s own understanding of the topic. In the interview, the teacher points out that students already know about the subject and have questions and opinions to share.

*Grades: Early elementary*

*Duration: 2 minutes*

## Chapter 4: Class Books

Children proudly present a book they have created titled *Everybody is Equal*. Sparks rich discussion about a gay-rights march, Nazis’ use of the pink triangle to oppress gay people, and getting teased for having warm connections with same-sex friends. Children give examples of being made fun of (for acting like a girl, being chubby, being Jewish) and how bad it feels. In the interview, a teacher comments on the vulnerability of gay and lesbian teachers and the importance of her involvement as a heterosexual woman. A mother explains why she opposes asking parents’ permission to discuss these issues. Another parent

says that having this issue discussed at school provides her with a natural opportunity to explain her beliefs to her children.

*Grades: Early elementary*

*Duration: 7 minutes*

## Chapter 5: Gay and Lesbian Inclusion in the Curriculum

Middle school students share their responses to the question of gay and lesbian inclusion in school curricula and debate different views. Sparks lively disagreements as students address assumptions that everyone is heterosexual, negative messages they encounter from some of their own family members, questions of fairness and the grade when such lessons should start.

*Grades: Middle school*

*Duration: 4 minutes*

## Chapter 6: Photo-Text Exhibit—*Love Makes a Family*

A principal explains her decision to display a photo exhibit of families with gay members, the controversy that ensued, reactions from parents and her reasons for going ahead. Children view the exhibit with serious interest. A veteran teacher learns from their response.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 4 minutes*

## Chapter 7: Stereotypes—Making Connections

A lesson is introduced with students generating examples of common stereotypes about teenagers as drug dealers and shoplifters, and Latinos eating beans and rice. Teacher invites the students to write down what their current attitudes about homosexuality are and what they would like to learn about it. Open discussion ensues, with students mentioning family members, stereotypes and their own confusion. In the interview, a heterosexual teacher describes dealing with his students’ assumptions that he must be gay.

*Grades: Middle school*

*Duration: 4 minutes*

**Chapter 8: Name-Calling—“Stop Right There”**

When a student says the word “faggot,” the teacher uses the opportunity to distinguish between jokes and put-downs.

Grades: Middle school

Duration: 2 minutes

**Chapter 9: Volunteer Speaker Presentations**

Two gay young adults talk about their own lives, then open the session for earnest questions that demonstrate students’ lack of information and their desire to learn about what it means to be gay or lesbian. Speakers clarify that the purpose of their visit is not to discuss their sex lives. Students comment afterward on stereotypes they had believed but that they now understand aren’t true.

Grades: Middle school

Duration: 6 minutes

**Chapter 10: Violence Prevention**

A teacher explains the importance of teaching respect as a way of preventing violence. News clips, with statistics, of teenage gay bashing. A principal explains how critical this kind of classroom discussion is to creating a productive academic environment.

Duration: 1 minute

**Chapter 11: Famous Gay and Lesbian People**

Through presentations of art, music, dance, entertainment and politics, a teacher identifies a number of famous gay and lesbian people, from Michelangelo to Melissa Etheridge. Children are surprised and fascinated.

Grades: Late elementary

Duration: 4 minutes

**Chapter 12: Gay and Lesbian Pride Day**

A principal and a parent speak about the school’s annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Day.

Duration: 1 minute

**Chapter 13: Asha’s Mums**

Alternates between a first-grade and second-grade classroom with teachers reading a story to children and their compassionate response. In the interview, a teacher explains her struggle between her culture, which condemns homosexuality, and her wish to affirm all her students. Children ask questions, clarify what “open-minded” means, and speak of gay friends. A child beams about having her two moms with her in class.

Grades: Early elementary

Duration: 5 minutes

**Chapter 14: Community Values**

A third-grade class discusses how they feel about anti-gay slurs and explores hurtful language. A child is troubled that teachers do not intervene. In the interview, a principal discusses the damaging message conveyed by not intervening.

Grades: Elementary

Duration: 4 minutes

**Chapter 15: Faculty Discussion**

In a faculty meeting about Gay Pride Day, a teacher questions the school’s stand and what it says to children whose families disagree. Models open discussion among educators and administrators, airing different points of view.

Duration: 3 minutes

**Chapter 16: Gay Pride Assembly**

Using a soccer ball analogy, an openly gay teacher explains how being able to tell the truth frees him to be a better teacher and colleague. After the assembly, students comment on the value of knowing some openly gay teachers. Statistics and commentary illustrate the risk for dropping out of school, alcohol and drug abuse and teen suicide.

Grades: Elementary school

Duration: 5 minutes

**Chapter 17: Mother’s Day**

By inviting children to share how they celebrated Mother’s Day, a teacher identifies many different family configurations and explores the definition of “family.” Emily, a child from another class, shares her Mother’s Day essay about her two moms, including her experience of another mother who would not let her child come to Emily’s house because her moms were lesbian and how she stood up for her moms. Another child expresses respect for Emily’s stand.

Grades: Elementary

Duration: 5 minutes

**Chapter 18: The Controversy**

Angry demonstrators quote the Bible, and the principal asserts the need for tolerance and mutual respect that cuts across religious lines.

Duration: 1 minute

**Chapter 19: Testimony**

A teacher explains his motivation for presenting gay and lesbian issues, trying to help others avoid the pain he experienced growing up gay.

Duration: 1 minute

**Chapter 20: Gay Marriage—A Debate on Current Issues**

Uses the common strategy of current-events lessons to raise questions for children to debate in small groups. Animated discussion in small groups.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 3 minutes*

**Chapter 21: Conclusion**

Parents, students and administrators offer their views on why it is important to address gay issues in schools.

*Duration: 1 minute*

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## Synopsis Of The Educational-Training Version Of It's Elementary

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The 37-minute educational-training version of ***It's Elementary*** was designed for workshops, in-service staff-training sessions, PTA meetings and other forums where there is not enough time to show the feature-length (78-minutes) documentary, or when the emphasis of the session is on discussion time among viewers.

All of the scenes in the educational-training version are excerpted from the feature-length documentary. In most cases, the lessons have been further edited to reduce the time of each scene. You may show this version from start to finish without interruption, or you may pause for discussion when it fades to black between scenes.

**Chapter 1: Opening**

Video credits alternating with children openly expressing their thoughts about gay issues. The director's voice introduces the video.

*Duration: 2 minutes*

**Chapter 2: Stereotypes, Part I**

A lesson is introduced with students generating examples of common stereotypes about teenagers as drug dealers and shoplifters, and Latinos eating beans and rice. Teacher invites the students to write down what their current attitudes about homosexuality are and what they would like to learn about it. Open discussion ensues, with students mentioning family members, stereotypes and their own confusion. In the interview, a heterosexual teacher describes dealing with his students' assumptions that he must be gay.

*Grades: Middle School*

*Duration: 5 minutes*

**Chapter 3: Brainstorm/Word Association**

In a classroom series on stereotypes, the teacher invites children to write down words they associate with the words "gay" and "lesbian." Shows the variety of ideas, questions and misconceptions young children have and the sources of their information. Interspersed with clips

from television talk shows, sitcoms, movies and news reports. Includes an interview with a teacher explaining the importance of addressing stereotypes and making the distinction that the issue is not gay sex, but rather people, biases and discrimination.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 8 minutes*

**Chapter 4: Photo-Text Exhibit-Love Makes a Family**

A principal explains her decision to display a photo exhibit of families with gay members, the controversy that ensued, reactions from parents and her reasons for going ahead. Children view the exhibit with serious interest. A veteran teacher learns from their response.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 3 minutes*

**Chapter 5: Stereotypes, Part II**

Volunteer Speaker Presentations: Two gay young adults talk about their own lives, then open the session for earnest questions that demonstrate students' lack of information and their desire to learn about what it means to be gay or lesbian. Speakers clarify that the purpose of their visit is not to discuss their sex lives. Students comment afterward on stereotypes they had believed but that they now understand are not true. Parent statement, newspaper

ads, and television news statistics point out the serious problems of drug abuse and suicide among gay youth.

**Violence Prevention:** A teacher explains the importance of teaching respect as a way of preventing violence. Shows newsclips, with statistics, of teenage gay bashing. A principal explains how critical this kind of classroom discussion is to creating a productive academic environment.

*Grades: Middle School*

*Duration: 7 minutes*

### **Chapter 6: Faculty Discussion**

In a faculty meeting about Gay Pride Day, a teacher questions the school's stand and what it says to children whose families disagree. The meeting models open discussion among educators and administrators, airing different points of view.

*Duration: 4 minutes*

### **Chapter 7: Gay Pride Assembly**

Using a soccer ball analogy, an openly gay teacher explains how being able to tell the truth frees him to be a better teacher and colleague.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 2 minutes*

### **Chapter 8: Name-Calling Discussion**

A third-grade class discusses how they feel about anti-gay slurs and explores hurtful language. A child is troubled that teachers do not intervene.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 2 minutes*

### **Chapter 9: Asha's Mums**

Alternates between a first-grade and second-grade classroom with teachers reading a story to children and their compassionate response. In the interview, a teacher explains her struggle between her culture, which condemns homosexuality, and her wish to affirm all her students. Children ask questions, clarify what "open-minded" means, and speak of gay friends. A child beams about having her two moms with her in class.

*Grades: Elementary*

*Duration: 4 minutes*

### **Chapter 10: Conclusion**

Message from Principal about promoting community values and the damaging message conveyed to children when adults do not intervene in anti-gay name-calling.

*Duration: 1 minute*

# Additional Resources

## **aMaze, Families All Matter Book Project**

Phone: 612-245-2655

Website: [www.amazeworks.org/programs/fam/fam.html](http://www.amazeworks.org/programs/fam/fam.html)  
*aMaze challenges bias by providing skill-building exercises and starting courageous conversations through the Families All Matter Book Project in schools, faith communities, after-school programs, and anywhere else children are together.*

## **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

Phone: 415-621-2493

Website: [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)  
*A nonprofit and civil liberties activist organization composed of more than 500,000 members and supporters, ACLU handles nearly 6,000 court cases annually to extend rights to segments of our population that have traditionally been denied their rights, including Native Americans and other people of color; lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people; women; mental health patients; prisoners; people with disabilities; and the poor.*

## **American Teacher's Federation**

Phone: 202-879-4400

Website: [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)  
*The mission of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, is to improve the lives of their members and their families, to give voice to their legitimate professional, economic and social aspirations, to strengthen the institutions in which we work, to improve the quality of the services we provide, to bring together all members to assist and support one another and to promote democracy, human rights and freedom in our union, in our nation and throughout the world.*

## **Anti-Defamation League, No Place for Hate**

Phone: 212-885-7700

Website: [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)  
*No Place For Hate® is a program of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) that helps schools enhance or create a culture of respect. This program is designed to celebrate diversity and empower members of the school community to challenge all forms of bigotry.*

## **Children's National Medical Center, Outreach Program for Children with Gender Variant Behaviors and their Families**

Phone: 202-476-3000

Website: [www.dccchildrens.com/dccchildrens/about/subclinical/subneuroscience/gender.aspx](http://www.dccchildrens.com/dccchildrens/about/subclinical/subneuroscience/gender.aspx)  
*Their main goal is to support and affirm young children with gender-variant behaviors so that they can grow and develop healthy self-esteem and positive social participation. Parents and professionals play key roles in advocating for these often-misunderstood children.*

## **COLAGE**

Phone: 415-861-5437

Website: [www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)  
*COLAGE is the only national organization in the world specifically supporting children, youth and adults with LGBT parent(s). Using experiences and creativity, COLAGE offers a diverse array of support, education and advocacy by and for folks with LGBT parents.*

## **Educators For Social Responsibility**

Phone: 800-370-2515

Website: [www.esrnational.org](http://www.esrnational.org)  
*Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) helps educators create safe, caring, respectful and productive learning environments. They also help educators work with young people to develop the social skills, emotional competencies and qualities of character they need to succeed in school and become contributing members of their communities.*

## **Family Equality Council**

Phone: 617-502-8700

Website: [www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)  
*A national advocacy organization committed to securing family equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer parents, guardians and allies. Their work consists of strategically linked initiatives—broad in scope, but simple in vision—love, justice, family, equality.*

**GenderPAC**

Phone: 202-462-6610

Website: [www.gpac.org](http://www.gpac.org)

*The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition works to ensure that classrooms, communities and workplaces are safe for everyone to learn, grow and succeed—whether or not they meet expectations for masculinity and femininity. As a human rights organization, GenderPAC also promotes an understanding of the connection between discrimination based on gender stereotypes and sex, sexual orientation, age, race and class.*

**GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Educational Network)**

Phone: 212-727-0135

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

*The largest national organization dedicated to bringing together gay and straight educators, parents, students and concerned citizens to end homophobia in schools. GLSEN has more than 60 chapters, organizes retreats and conferences, distributes a newsletter and videos and maintains an extensive publications catalog. Provides reading list and curriculum ideas.*

**Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network**

Phone: 415-552-4229

Website: [www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

*Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources. Through peer support, leadership development and training, GSA Network supports young people in starting strengthening and sustaining GSAs.*

**Human Rights Campaign**

Phone: 202-628-4160

Website: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

*America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality. HRC lobbies Congress, provides campaign support to fair-minded candidates, and works to educate the public on a wide array of topics affecting LGBT Americans, including relationship recognition, workplace, family and health issues.*

**Lambda Legal**

Phone: 212-809-8585

Website: [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)

*A national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.*

**National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)**

Phone: 415-392-6257

Website: [www.NCLRights.org](http://www.NCLRights.org)

*A national legal organization committed to advancing the civil and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families through litigation, public policy advocacy and public education.*

**National Education Association**

Phone: 202-833-4000

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

*The nation's largest professional employee organization committed to advancing the cause of public education. NEA's 3.2 million members work at every level of education—from pre-school to university graduate programs. NEA has affiliate organizations in every state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States.*

**National Education Association, Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Caucus**

Phone: 717-848-3354, 301-774-1701

Website: [www.nea-glbtc.org](http://www.nea-glbtc.org)

*Represents public-education employees who are concerned about sexual orientation issues in school settings. NEA sponsors trainings, maintains a resource library, produces a newsletter, and is a referral source for public-school teachers facing discrimination.*

**National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

Phone: 202-393-5177

Website: [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

*The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Inc. works to build the grassroots political power of the LGBT community to win complete equality through direct and grassroots lobbying to defeat anti-LGBT ballot initiatives and legislation and pass pro-LGBT legislation.*

**National Youth Advocacy Coalition**

Phone: 800-541-6922

Website: [www.nyacyouth.org](http://www.nyacyouth.org)

*The National Youth Advocacy Coalition is a social justice organization that advocates for and with young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) in an effort to end discrimination against these youth and to ensure their physical and emotional well being.*

**PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)**

Phone: 202-467-8180

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

*A national network of individuals with hundreds of local chapters and speaker's bureaus, that offers support, information and advocacy on education issues.*

**The Safe Schools Coalition**

Phone: 206-296-4970

Website: [www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)

*An international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth providing crisis support, workshops and training on sexual-minority issues for parents, students, community groups, school boards and professionals. The Safe Schools Coalition listserv and website has the latest news, resources, and events relevant to addressing all forms of prejudice among youth.*

**Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED)**

Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College

Phone: 781-283-2500

Website: [www.wcwoonline.org/seed](http://www.wcwoonline.org/seed)

*A staff-development equity project for educators devoted to providing teacher-led faculty development seminars on gender-fair and multi-culturally equitable curricula in public and private schools throughout the U.S. and in English-speaking international schools.*

**Transgender Law Center (TLC)**

Phone: 415-865-0176

Website: [www.transgenderlawcenter.org](http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org)

*A civil rights organization that utilizes direct legal services, public policy advocacy and educational opportunities to advance the rights and safety of diverse transgender communities.*

# Contributing Authors

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**Debra Chasnoff**, Director and Producer of *It's Elementary—Talking About Gay Issues in Schools*. Executive Director of GroundSpark and co-creator of The Respect For All Project.

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**Cloe F. Cooper**, Civil Liberty and Public Policy Intern, from Hampshire College. Co-director of *The Unspoken*, a United Nations funded documentary on women in post-bellum Kosovo.

**Michael Courville**, MA, MSW served as National Program Director of GroundSpark, The Respect For All Project 2005-2007.

**Judy Logan**, former middle school teacher in San Francisco public schools for 31 years, author of *Teaching Stories* (1999), and independent educational consultant since 1989. Senior Facilitator with GroundSpark, The Respect For All Project.

**Beth Reis**, Public Health Educator, Department of Public Health - Seattle & King County, and Co-Chair for the Safe Schools Coalition, former teacher, a curriculum developer, and a guest speaker for over 25 years in elementary, middle and high schools and colleges of education.

**Mara Sapon-Shevin**, Professor of Inclusive Education at Syracuse University, author of *Widening the Circle: The Power of Inclusive Classrooms* (2007), and peace and social justice activist.

**Diana Scarselletta Straut**, Ph.D., faculty member of the Lally School of Education, author and independent consultant specializing in participatory research and collaborative organizational change, and co-author of *Access to Academics*.

**Kim Westheimer**, independent educational consultant for schools and non-profits and co-author of *When the Drama Club is Not Enough: Lessons from the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students* (2002).

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## Project Partner

**Welcoming Schools Project**, a project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, is a new comprehensive resource for creating LGBT inclusive elementary schools. The *Welcoming Schools Guide* includes tools, lessons and resources on family diversity, gender stereotyping and name calling in a framework that is developmentally and academically on-target for a K-5 learning environment.

## Other Films From The Respect For All Project

### Let's Get Real

**"Let's Get Real** lets students speak for themselves about the dangers they face in the classroom. This video should be REQUIRED VIEWING for anyone interested in providing safe schools for young people." —**Jerald Newberry, executive director, National Education Association's Health Information Network**

**Let's Get Real** gives educators and youth professionals an effective tool to intervene to curb name-calling, bullying and school violence. With amazing courage and candor, students in grades six through nine talk about the underlying stereotypes and prejudice that lead young people to tease or harass one another.

After watching the film, audiences of all ages will re-evaluate the idea that name-calling and bullying are just a normal part of growing up.

**Let's Get Real** is unique among anti-bullying resources because:

- It features real students—not actors and not adults—talking honestly about what happens in schools today.
- It examines bullying from a wide range of perspectives—from victims to perpetrators to bystanders.
- It exposes tough social issues behind bullying, including racial and ethnic tensions, anti-gay prejudice, sexual harassment and gender bias.

**Let's Get Real** inspires students to have an honest dialogue that fosters an awareness about their own roles in society and what they can do to prevent prejudice and promote understanding.

#### WINNER!

- Columbine Award—Best Short Documentary, Moon-dance International Film Festival
- Notable Children's Video, American Library Association

35-minutes • DVD/VHS

Comes with extensive curriculum guide



**"That's a Family!** is wonderful and a must for every elementary school classroom. These children's insights about their families must be heard by all parents, teachers, counselors and others who are committed to helping our nation's children understand and celebrate difference and diversity." —**Michele Harway, PhD, former president, American Psychological Association, Division of Family Psychology**

Designed for use with students in grades K-6, **That's a Family!** takes viewers on a tour of the many kinds of families that exist today. Children introduce their families and speak candidly about what it is like to grow up with parents of different races or religion, divorced parents, single parents, gay or lesbian parents, adoptive parents or grandparents as guardians.

By serving as both a window into the lives of their peers, and a mirror for their own lives, this film breaks new ground in helping kids see and understand many of the different shapes that families take today.

**That's a Family!** makes a great training and classroom resource, and serves as a powerful introduction for your children about the value of "difference."

#### WINNER!

- First Place, National Council on Family Relations Media Awards
- CINE Golden Eagle Master Series Award, Non-Broadcast Film

35-minutes • DVD/VHS

Comes with discussion and teaching guide

# STRAIGHTLACED

Featuring real students of diverse backgrounds, ***Straightlaced*** is the first film and educational campaign to explore how homophobia and gender stereotypes limit the healthy development of all students, regardless of their own identity.

***Straightlaced*** will help facilitate discussions about:

- Homophobia and gender-based violence that affect all teens, regardless of their own identity.
- Stereotypes that limit students' academic, career and extracurricular choices.
- The sexual pressures based on gender expectations which young people face today.
- The intersections of racial, gender and class bias.
- Creating more welcoming and inclusive learning environments.

The film is projected to be released in late 2008, and will include an extensive curriculum guide tied to academic standards in reading, writing, math and life skills.

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## Professional Development Workshops From The Respect For All Project

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**The Respect For All Project** offers a series of professional development workshops for educators, human services professionals and youth service providers. The workshops center around the effective use of our films in educational, clinical and social service settings and give adults the skills and tools needed to address issues of harassment and bias, provide culturally competent services, and develop empathy among the youth they lead.

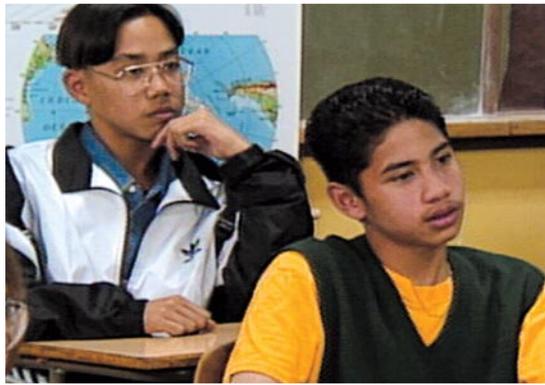
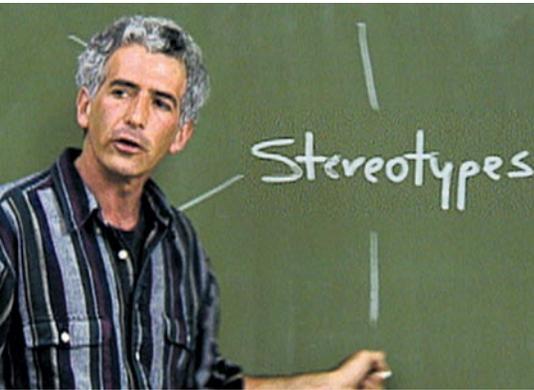
Thousands of professionals have attended workshops, which focus on showcasing promising practices related to the use of our films when working directly with students, families and a wide array of human service professionals.

Workshop Participants:

- Explore foundational research and conceptual models that support the use of the film tool kit.
- Receive guidance and resources for working with children and youth to address: human diversity and difference, bias prevention, halting name-calling and prejudice.
- Model/practice select classroom and group activities.
- Design action plans.

**For more information about our films and workshops,  
call 1-800-405-3322 or visit [www.respectforall.org](http://www.respectforall.org).**





## PRAISE FOR **It's Elementary**

**"Smart, rewarding, enormously valuable..."**

—Los Angeles Times

"Educators must be proactive about addressing prejudice and bias if students are to stay in school and realize their full potential. The NEA strongly encourages educators to use **It's Elementary** as a means of ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for every child."

—Reg Weaver, president, National Education Association

"**It's Elementary** inspires educators to address homophobia and create classrooms where all youth are respected. It should be mandatory for all new teachers if we are serious about raising kids to be free of hate and prejudice."

—Judy Shepard, executive director, Matthew Shepard Foundation

"**It's Elementary** ought to be mandatory viewing for anyone involved in secular or religious education. As a Christian minister, I have found this film to be a tremendous tool for helping to generate conversation on this important topic with groups of all ages."

—The Reverend Philip Cable, Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church

"**It's Elementary** is a vital resource for introducing the important issue of sexual orientation into teacher education programs. This fine film offers a variety of models showing how anti-gay prejudice and harassment can be appropriately addressed in K-8 classrooms."

—Margaret S. Crocco, professor and program coordinator, Social Studies Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

**"Remarkable...should be in any library collection interested in education, community issues or gay and lesbian studies."** —Video Librarian