

WHAT ONE TEACHER CAN DO

Creating an inclusive environment in the classroom is a powerful way to legitimize LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students and families. Consider using some of the techniques below to establish a welcoming and inclusive space for all students and put an end to the silence that creates an environment where bullying thrives.

Incorporate LGBT-Inclusive Material into Your Curriculum

Language Arts: Assign books that challenge ideas about traditional families and gender roles or that deal with bullying. Have students write about families different from their own.

Social Studies: Include famous LGBT people, like civil rights activists, Harvey Milk and Bayard Rustin, into your history lesson. Discuss LGBT discrimination and successes in history (ex. The Stonewall Riots). Have students bring in articles about LGBT current events. Talk about the importance of allies in past civil rights movements.

Math: Use your word problems to reflect all kinds of families (ex. “Sam and his moms bought 2 pizzas...”)

Science: Highlight famous LGBT scientists (ex. Sir Francis Bacon, Sonya Kovalesvsky, Florence Nightingale, and Alan Turing)

Music and Art: Talk about LGBT artists and musicians, as well as famous people who do not follow traditional gender roles. Watch for “teachable moments” if students tease about boys who dance or sing, etc.

Physical Education: Allow all students to participate in all sports and activities, including helping out with carrying equipment, etc. Prepare responses ahead of time so you are ready for comments like, “You throw like a girl,” or for teasing in the locker room.

Library: Work to ensure your school library has a selection of books that include different families, cultures, races, economic backgrounds, etc., as well as books that include heroes and heroines who are non-traditional in their gender roles.

*“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***

Respond When You Hear “That’s So Gay”

Stop It

Be ready with a quick response like:

- “Choose another word, please.”
- “That’s not ok, to use that phrase.”
- “Do you know why that’s hurtful?”

Don’t Ignore It

- If students see you do nothing, they get the message that it is ok. Harassment doesn’t go away on its own.
- Almost any response is better than none at all. Making mistakes is better than not acting. You can always talk to the students again if you feel you did not respond well.
- Every time you respond you will become more comfortable and clearer in your message. **Be Proactive**
- Develop an environment of respect for all students in your classroom.
- Establish clear policies against name-calling and hurtful teasing.
- Make sure students understand what gay means and why “that’s so gay” is hurtful. *“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?” – Elementary school teacher in **It’s Elementary***

Make Your School a Safe and Welcoming Place for All People

- Advocate for faculty and staff trainings on LGBT issues. Call the Transgender Allies Group to schedule a training. (775-742-8673)
- Use inclusive language (ex. “date” rather than boyfriend or girlfriend).
- Work to establish fair policies to protect LGBT people and promote equal rights.
- Decorate your classroom with LGBT friendly posters, pictures and signs.
- Volunteer to supervise a gay/straight alliance.
- Invite LGBT speakers to your school to speak to both staff and students. *“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*** *Some of the content for this flier was taken from **It’s Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School** (A guide to community organizing, professional development and K-8 curriculum) For more information go to www.groundspark.org or call 1-800-405-3322.