



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

About the Film

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

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

Streaming online at: www.welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow.

Goals

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

Discussion Ideas

Ask Participants to Talk About...

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



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

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

Related Discussion Questions

For Families:

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

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

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

Next Steps

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

About HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools

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

