



WELCOMING SCHOOLS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

COLLABORATE & DEVELOP SUPPORT TO CREATE A CARING COMMUNITY

Collaboration is key. Begin by finding support in your school community. As an administrator, work with key stakeholders to assess, develop and implement plans for creating a positive and welcoming school climate. As an educator, talk with your colleagues, administrators and parents. As a parent or guardian talk with other parents/guardians, with the PTO/PTA, and with teachers and administrators. Engage a diverse cross-section of stakeholders in planning and implementation. The more people who see the need for a positive and respectful school climate, the more you will be able to make improvements.

GATHER INFORMATION – WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL

Evaluate what is working to create a positive school climate and what can be improved. Assess the school climate with surveys of staff, students and families. See how Welcoming Schools work could be integrated into existing anti-bullying or SEL programs such as Olweus or Second Step.

Sharing real students' and families' stories from your school can be effective in explaining why addressing hurtful name-calling and bullying is important.. Speak with teachers and guidance staff about what they have observed in the school related to bias-based teasing and bullying. See if there are parental concerns about children being teased because of their families' structure or children's identities.

SMART FIRST STEPS – ENGAGE ADULTS IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Provide professional development on interrupting and stopping bias-based name-calling or bullying and ways to respond to students' questions on diverse families. Most educators have little experience talking about LGBT topics or other forms of bias with students. Professional development can help answer many questions and calm the fears that typically arise.

Hold school community forums on ending hurtful teasing and bullying. Ensure that the ways in which children are actually teased are addressed by looking at bullying based on race, anti-LGBT perceptions, gender, religion, class and body size.

Help people see, understand and value the diversity of families in the school and wider community with evening events recognizing and celebrating family diversity. These events provide parents/guardians the opportunity to learn from each other and understand the importance of creating welcoming schools.

ENSURE A FOUNDATION FOR A RESPECTFUL AND WELCOMING SCHOOL

Link Welcoming Schools work with your school's core values, mission statements or policies. Help people see the connections between a positive school climate and academic achievement for all students. Ensure that anti-bullying or harassment policies include the need to protect more vulnerable students by naming these categories. Develop positive supports for good behavior and consistent discipline policies for handling hurtful teasing and bullying behavior.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Plan how you will communicate with parents/guardians about lessons or discussions that arise regarding family diversity. Help families think about ways to have more informed conversations at home. Help people understand that when you are talking with elementary school students about LGBT people, you are talking about families, name-calling, discrimination or current events. Listen carefully to the questions, doubts and fears of the people within the school or the larger community. Look for opportunities to foster dialogue in respectful and inclusive ways.