

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Six to twelve year olds talk about gays and lesbians



FACILITATION GUIDE





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WELCOMING SCHOOLS FACILITATION GUIDE

TO THE FILM

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

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 - Greater Boston PFLAG
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INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION TO *WELCOMING SCHOOLS*

[*Welcoming Schools*](#) provides tools and resources to address family diversity, gender stereotyping, bullying and name-calling in K-5 learning environments. The *Welcoming Schools Guide* helps administrators, educators and parents/guardians create environments in which all students are welcomed and respected. The guide is unique because it includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender topics in the context of the full range of diversity in our schools. (See [*Welcoming Schools Guide*](#).)

The objectives of *Welcoming Schools* are to help schools:

- Improve school climate so that all students and families feel safe and welcome
- Increase family involvement
- Improve students' academic achievement.
- Teach respect for diversity
- Decrease bullying behavior.

Welcoming Schools reflects the diversity of families that are part of most schools:

- More than 1.5 million children are adopted.¹
- 6.5 million children live with grandparents.²
- Almost 3 million children identify as being of more than one race.³
- More than half of the African-American same-sex couples in California are raising children.⁴
- In heavily rural states, such as Mississippi, South Dakota and Alaska, households headed by same-sex couples are more likely to have children than same-sex households in other states.⁵

Welcoming Schools offers workshops on how to make classrooms a welcoming space for students from all kinds of families. In these workshops, questions sometimes arise about what it means to be inclusive of students with gay or lesbian parents. Viewing *What Do You Know?* and engaging in structured activities helps to address these concerns and facilitate dialogue.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, —Facts for Features: Special Edition: National Adoption Month,|| September 20, 2004. Available at: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/002683.html

² Rose M. Kreider, U.S. Census Bureau, —Living Arrangements of Children: 2004,|| Current Population Reports, February 2008 (p. 12). Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p70-114.pdf>

³ Women's Educational Media, "*That's a Family!*" Statistics on U.S. Families." Available at:

http://www.groundspeak.org/press/thatfamily_kit/taf_statistics_kit.html. As cited by Jane Fritsch in *The New York Times*, May 20, 2001.

⁴ Gary Gates & Bradley Sears, Williams Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Law, —Black Same-Sex Couples in California,|| September 2005. Available at: www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/AfricanAmericanReport.pdf.

⁵ Sean Cahill, Mitra Ellen & Sarah Tobias, —Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children,|| excerpt from *Family Policy: Issues Affecting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Families*, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Jan. 22, 2003. Available at: http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/family_policy

INTRODUCTION

Welcoming Schools also provides tools to prevent bullying and teasing. Schools can use these tools to provide an improved school climate for all students. *Welcoming Schools* addresses bullying and name-calling based on bias, including bias related to LGBT people. This type of harassment is reported at all grade levels and hurts all students, not just those who have LGBT parents or relatives or who are LGBT themselves.

Research shows that educators and administrators from schools where *Welcoming Schools* was piloted and evaluated reported an improved school climate as a result of *Welcoming Schools* (See [Pilot & Evaluation Results](#).) Additional research shows a strong link between bullying and decreased academic achievement. Unfortunately, bullying is prevalent in elementary schools.

- 27 percent of elementary school students reported that they told someone that they were bullied in the past month. Targets most often told a parent or a friend. Students were less likely to tell a teacher or another adult at school.⁶
- Students who are targeted at school and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement.⁷
- In a nationwide survey, children said they feared anti-gay harassment more than any other kind of name-calling.⁸
- For every lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender student who reported being harassed, four straight students said they were harassed for being perceived to be gay or lesbian.⁹
- Students who experience acceptance at school and at home are more highly motivated and engaged in learning.¹⁰
- In schools with a greater sense of community, students have higher educational aspirations and are more academically motivated.¹¹

⁶ Virginia Youth Violence Project, School of Education, University of Virginia, 2008.

⁷ Joseph A. Drake, James H. Price & Susan K. Tellijohann, The Nature and Extent of Bullying at School, *Journal of Schools Health*, May 2003 (173-180)

⁸ Drake 173-180.

⁹ Beth Reis & Elizabeth Saewyc, Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, —83,000 Youth: Selected Findings of Eight Population Based Studies, 1999 (7) Available at: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/83000youth.pdf>.

¹⁰ K. F. Osterman (2000) Students' need for belonging in the school community, *Review of Educational Research* 70(3), (323-367)

¹¹ A. Bryk & M. Driscoll, The High School as Community: Contextual Influences and Consequences for Students and Teachers, National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, 1988. D. Solomon, V. Battistich, M. Watson, E. Schaps, & C. Lewis,

II. WHY THIS FILM? WHY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE STUDENTS?

“What Do You Know? is a powerful film that shares students' voices on how to create a positive school environment. These students' concerns need to be heard by school boards, educators, administrators and parents' organizations as they tackle school climate issues.”

- Mary Broderick, president of National School Boards Association and a member of Connecticut's East Lyme Board of Education since 1989

In workshops around the country, we have met educators and administrators who are committed to creating welcoming schools and classrooms. Some are comfortable answering questions about gays and lesbians. Others aren't quite sure what to say. Some are comfortable stopping anti-gay teasing and then talking about why it is wrong and hurtful. Others may only say, “Stop it,” but then do not know what else to say to a student or classroom. Many educators, administrators and parents seek resources and training to do more to create a safe and secure learning environment for all their students. *Welcoming Schools* and the film, *What Do You Know?*, is a place to start.

Regardless of the comfort levels at your school, there are always educators who feel nervous or uncertain about discussing gay or lesbian topics with students, whether they are answering questions from students or educating students after hearing anti-gay put-downs.

Educators often ask us, “What do elementary school students know about gays and lesbians? Where do they learn about these words? Will I be the first to mention it? Are they too young to understand? What do children need us to do or say?” We made this film as a step to answering those questions and as a training tool for all adults who are eager to hear what students have to say.

While it is clear that every classroom will be different, we were struck by the useful answers and insights from the 25 children we interviewed in Alabama and Massachusetts. These students, ages six to twelve, come from a variety of schools and have a wide spectrum of understanding and experiences. The students answer the big questions of what, when and how they learned about gay and lesbian people. They explain why they want adult voices reassuring students that all families are welcome at school. They believe teasing people based on who a student's family is or how any child acts is unacceptable.

In the film you will hear students say:

- *“Even kindergarteners know the word in my school.”*
- *“I've heard it on the bus.”*
- *“My mom/My friend /My teacher told me what 'gay' means.”*
- *“The way kids talk about it, I thought it was something really bad.”*
- *“Gay means when two people love each other who are the same gender.”*
- *“It's nasty.”*
- *“There's nothing wrong with being gay.”*
- *“My parent/sister/cousin/teacher is gay.”*
- *“I wish they'd stop teasing my little brother about being gay.”*
- *“I wish the teachers would explain it more.”*

III. GOALS OF *WHAT DO YOU KNOW?*

"In What Do You Know?, we learn that students are hearing "that's so gay" from their earliest years in school and are wanting schools to do much more to address bias, discrimination and injustice. School leaders, educators and parents should watch and discuss this eye-opening film today."

– Kevin Kumashiro, president elect, National Association of Multicultural Education

Welcoming Schools produced *What Do You Know?* for adults in any role within an elementary classroom's support network, including educators, administrators, counselors, librarians, parents, guardians and other family members. Specific goals include:

- Show that many children ages six to twelve already have a base level of knowledge, myths and attitudes about LGBT topics
- Share the sources of children's knowledge, including families, friends, teachers, religious education, TV and books
- Model ways children are able to talk about these topics
- Consider what children may want to know or see reflected in their classrooms
- Help viewers reflect on what they know about their own students and families, and help them develop tools to respond to questions and comments from kids
- Reinforce the importance of students being allies for their peers
- Highlight the advantages of listening carefully to children when they share what they know or want to know to feel familiar and comfortable with all members of their community
- Provide viewers with strategies to welcome all families and all students

USING THE FILM

IV. BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE 25 CHILDREN APPEARING IN THE FILM

We identified the students in the film by asking elementary school teachers and staff, as well as religious school educators, to help us meet children, ages six to twelve and from a variety of family backgrounds, who would be willing to talk about what they know about gay and lesbian people. We knew that a few of the students had gay or lesbian parents, but it was not until the interviews that we found out that some of the other children had gay or lesbian relatives.

All the children received permission from their parents to be included in this film and were pre-interviewed in their homes, schools, churches or local coffee shops. They live in a variety of settings: urban, rural and suburban, and reflect a variety of economic backgrounds.

All but one of the children attend public schools. Of the public schools, one is a magnet school, one is a Spanish bilingual program and the others were either K-8 or K-5. The children come from diverse families:

- Nineteen are being raised by moms and dads
- Six come from families where there has been a divorce
- Three have lesbian or gay parents
- Three are being raised by single moms
- Two are adopted
- Six have parents who were born outside of the U.S.
- At least five have parents from two different religions, races or countries, and
- One has a lesbian grandmother.

We sought students who had stories to tell, but no attempt was made to seek students based on their speaking skills. We found the children eager to tell us about their experiences. In a quiet classroom, without interruptions of school bells and other classmates, they all found their voice. We simply edited out plenty of “uhhms,” nervous giggles and long pauses. In retrospect, many adults viewing the film, including some of the adults working on the film, are struck by how articulate the students seem. One 12-year-old who helped in the production remarked that, “adults always think we have so little to say.”

“The film What Do You Know? is an inspiring reminder that we have much to learn from students. They are more observant than we think, and have solutions to dilemmas that we might think are beyond their grasp. They remind us that, as one student in the film says, ‘we should never turn love into hate.’”

– Brian Law, former president,
National School Counselor
Association and the Georgia
School Counselor Association

V. HOW DIFFERENT AUDIENCES MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE FILM

The film can be used in multiple contexts. Your school may be considering or implementing many of the trainings, lesson plans and policy recommendations of *Welcoming Schools*. Or perhaps your school is taking a comprehensive look at bullying prevention and you'd like to use this video in a teacher training. Some schools will use our film to strengthen their social and emotional learning programs. Schools have used *Welcoming Schools* in conjunction with programs such as Second Step, Olweus and Responsive Classroom.

Discussions of *What Do You Know?* will vary depending on the audience to whom it is shown. Below are some ideas for ways in which the film can be used with different audiences and ways that these audiences might benefit from seeing the film.

“Children are already having conversations regarding gay and lesbian people. It is therefore important and necessary for educators and parents to engage in these critical conversations in order to ensure that the use of terms is without intentional or unintentional harm. What Do You Know? is a powerful tool to help schools and communities welcome all children and their families.”

– Rev. Eric P. Lee, president/CEO,
*Southern Christian Leadership
Conference, CA*

1. Administrators and Policy Makers

- Hear from children what they know about gay and lesbian topics and what they want their teachers and schools to do
- Establish the need for professional development or materials on family diversity or anti-bullying that are LGBT inclusive

2. Educators

- Use as a part of training to stop bullying and teasing
- Hear ideas from students about what would help in their classrooms
- Develop strategies for supporting all families and students

3. School Counselors / Psychologists / Social Workers

- See that students want proactive discussions and interventions on lesbian and gay topics
- Understand that some schools have incorporated discussion of LGBT terms and topics in their social and emotional learning

4. Parents / Family

- Recognize that children are already having conversations regarding gay and lesbian people (sometimes out of earshot of parents)
- Understand that students want educators to stop LGBT teasing at school and to welcome all students' families
- Create a springboard for discussing ways to talk with their own children when they come home with questions

5. Religious Educators

- Gain insight into what children need from the adults and educators in their lives
- Help religious school educators and parents engage in critical conversations in order to ensure that LGBT terms are used without intentional or unintentional harm

6. National Organizations and Their Local Chapters

- See ways to address safe schools at the elementary level
- Use as a learning tool and starting point for discussions at chapter meetings
- Use as a catalyst for developing LGBT inclusive policy and materials

7. Gay Straight Alliances, Diversity Groups and Anti-Bullying Groups in Middle and High School

- Prompt discussion about the students' experiences throughout their school years
- Discuss the role of administrators, teachers and students in stopping bullying more effectively and educate students more on LGBT topics
- Look at ways to help stop harassment and bullying of younger students in their school systems

A note about using the film with students:

This film was designed as a tool to use for professional development, and to foster dialogue among parents and guardians. As adults have seen the film, many have seen the value of using it with students. Before you show the film to students, consider the foundation that has been created for having conversations about LGBT people with students, staff and parents and guardians. If this type of groundwork has not been laid, there are tools in *Welcoming Schools* that could be helpful. They include:

- [Getting Started](#)
- Your Role as:
 - [Educator](#)
 - [School Administrator](#)
 - [Librarian](#)
 - [Parent or Caring Adult](#)
- [Community Building Ideas for Parent/Guardian Involvement in Your School](#)
- [School Climate Assessment](#)
- [Responding to Some Concerns About Being LGBT Inclusive](#)

VI. TIPS FOR SCREENING THE FILM

One model suggests that successful trainings include these five elements: context, empathy, facts, skills and action. (This model was developed by DiversityWorks and Felice Yeskel and then expanded by staff of the Massachusetts Department of Education.)

What Do You Know? can be used to support all five of these elements depending on how you decide to arrange a training. The following are examples:

“This film is a must-see for school faculty and parents. I am inspired by the honesty and candidness of the children who talk about their experiences with the word ‘gay.’ I hope this film will be used as a catalyst for more conversation and understanding on this important topic.”

– Francis Hunt, Nashville director,
Stand for Children

1. **Context:** Use the film to introduce the issues and establish the need for trainings and discussions in a school or organization.
2. **Empathy:** Use the film to ground each adult in the reality of the issues from the perspectives of children.
3. **Facts:** Use the film to provide specific answers on how children address questions that complement any statistical information that might also be part of a workshop. (See [Students’ Questions and Sample Responses](#))
4. **Skills:** Use the film to support adults in improving their own abilities to interact with their students based on feedback from the students on the DVD as well as teacher comments included as a four-minute DVD special feature, *Teachers Respond*. (See page 19 for a *Teachers Respond* description and a list of post-screening discussion and role-play exercises.)
5. **Action:** Use the film to develop specific next steps based on the students’ recommendations about what they wish adults would do. The teachers in the DVD special feature, *Teachers Respond*, also offer suggestions for action. Finally, there are many recommendations for action in the *Welcoming Schools Guide*.

Every school and every audience has its own unique needs. This film may be part of an all day workshop, a two-hour in-service or a 30 minute exercise during a faculty meeting. In this section, we offer you a variety of activities to do before and/or after screening the film. Many of these exercises are from our *Welcoming Schools Guide* while some are specific to the film.

Welcoming Schools has a small group of trainers nationwide who can provide technical assistance to help you develop a training that is right for your school. When possible, *Welcoming Schools* will provide trainers to come on site. For more information contact: welcomingschools@hrc.org.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT A TRAINING FOR 1–2 HOURS

The agenda below is designed for a staff professional development session. It has tools to set the stage before showing the film, to help the group share their responses to the film and to develop action steps based on the experiences of the students featured in the film.

1. Introduce Topic with Goals for the Presentation and Ground Rules and Expectations
2. Pre-Screening Icebreaker, such as Stand up/Sit down
3. Early Memories Exercise
4. Introduce Film
5. Post Screening Discussion and/or Activities
6. Next Steps and Closing

Pre-screening Icebreaker: Stand up/Sit down (5 minutes)

Introduction to the activity:

You can introduce this activity as an opportunity to get a sense of who is in the room and what some of their experiences have been in relation to the topics covered by *Welcoming Schools*. Read the questions and ask participants to either stand up or raise their hands if the answer to the question is “yes.”

1. *Have you seen students excluded or put down because of some aspect of their identity, or because of the composition of their family? (Ask for some examples.)*
2. *Have you taught a child who was called names because other students thought that he or she did not act enough like a boy or like a girl?*
3. *Have you taught a child who has two mothers or two fathers?*
4. *Do you think that most students you work with have heard the words gay or lesbian? Do they know what they mean?*
5. *Have you heard students use the words such as gay or lesbian in a negative way? (Using phrases such as ‘that’s gay’ or ‘don’t act so gay.’)*
6. *Have you helped a student who was excluded or put down because of some aspect of that child’s identity? (Ask for volunteers to share a few examples of what they did that was effective.)*

The professional development activities found in the *Connecting with Colleagues – Learning Together* section of the *Welcoming Schools Guide*, such as Early Memories, can help set ground rules for a group. (See [Connecting with Colleagues – Learning Together](#))

Early Memories

(See [Early Memories of LGBT People \(PDF\)](#))

This activity, found at the link above, can help set the tone by asking participants to reflect upon the messages they received about LGBT people as children. Often a group may be surprised at how young they were when they became aware of LGBT people.

After this exercise you may want to ask questions such as:

- *What messages do you think children are getting now about LGBT people? How are they the same or different from the messages we just talked about?*
- *What messages do you think your school or community gives children about LGBT people?*

Introducing the Film

Before screening the film, you may want to introduce this film with the following thoughts:

As we heard in the previous exercise, we got messages about gays and lesbians from many sources, but we're not always sure how kids are having these conversations today. The film we're about to see lets us hear directly from students about what they already know about gays and lesbians, what they have heard around school and what questions they might have. Rather than bring in a panel of students, you are about to experience 25 students on film. The students come from Alabama and Massachusetts and all but one of them are from public schools. None of these students were coached on what to say. These are their stories.

We will discuss the film afterwards. Please listen for stories that may be familiar to what you have heard in your own classrooms, as well as stories you haven't heard yet.

Opening Discussion after Screening the Film

After the film, you may want to open discussion by asking a general question such as:

What stories stood out for you, moved you or surprised you, and why?

At this point, people will tend to bring up particular students that struck them. For some teachers, this may be the first time they have heard from children with gay and lesbian parents so they may start by referring to those students.

Other teachers may be moved by the description of the cousin's marriage, the list of insults including the words 'fatty' and 'faggot,' the homeroom teacher sharing his opinions or the profound and almost poetic points made by many of the students.

Some teachers will be most struck by the students who discuss what teachers do not do. Some may hear this as a personal critique and feel deflated or defensive. Others may hear these comments as a call to action. It may be helpful to acknowledge all that teachers do everyday and build on the experience of all the caring educators in the room.

You might hear about the child with shoulder-length hair in the "tough guys wear pink" shirt. This child is a boy. If someone refers to him as a girl, you may want to let the person share fully

their response. When they are done, you may want to let them know the student is a boy and that many people assume he is a girl. Likewise, there is a girl who might be mistaken for a boy who has short dark hair and says she was teased in third grade with the words “lame, boring and boy.” Some people might also be confused because they had trouble fully hearing her recitation of the phrase “lame, boring and boy” because it is an unusual combination and she says it so quickly.

These last two children raise the broader issue of students who don’t conform to gender norms. You may want to go further in discussing this topic here or at some later point in the training. It may be helpful to identify with the discomfort of not knowing someone’s gender or identifying it incorrectly. (See [Gender and Children: A Place to Begin for Educators](#))

Post-screening Discussion Prompts

Depending on the size of the group and time available, you may want to use the following prompts to create a discussion among the entire group, or in smaller clusters that break out and then report back.

1. *In the film, several children mentioned they had heard the word gay by kindergarten and several students mentioned that they have only heard the word in a negative context in school. What have you heard in your school?*
2. *In the film, one student says, "My teacher talked about how we should not say 'that's so gay' because it could hurt someone's feelings..." Could you imagine having that kind of conversation with your students? How do you think they would react? What concerns would you have? In what contexts, might you expand the conversation beyond "That could hurt someone's feelings?" What else might you say and why?*
3. *In the film, one boy says, "No one knows my mother is a lesbian." Why would he feel like he can't be open? What might be some cues he gets from peers and adults that reinforce his silence? What might the impact of that be on him? On his learning? On other students with families that are different than most?*
4. *One student talks about going to the park where tougher kids play and use the word gay as an insult. He says, "Sometimes I let it slide and don't speak up...sometimes it seems like the right thing to do..." How would you respond to him about his choice? In the film, this student has two moms. Would your response differ if the child had a mom and a dad?*
5. *The same student discusses how if he were to get bullied, he would go to his math teacher, who is a lesbian. What are other ways teachers can signify that they are welcoming if they are not an out gay or lesbian teacher? What is the value in straight teachers making themselves accessible as allies? What are the barriers to gay and lesbian teachers being out?*
6. *Several students describe how they act as 'allies' by asking other students not to say "that's so gay." In what ways do we as adults encourage and support ally behavior? How can this work relate to being an ally in a broad variety of contexts?*
7. *Did you have any "aha moments" while watching the film?*

Note: The next question could serve as a closing to a workshop by helping participants focus on next steps to creating more inclusive schools or communities. You may want to record responses on a piece of easel paper so the group has a record of its likely action steps.

8. *Did a student say something in the film that encourages you to want to change something you do in the classroom, or to want to change something your school does as an institution? What are next steps that will help your school or community move forward?*

Additional Post-Screening Activities

Worksheet on What Do You Know About Your School?

In the film *What Do You Know?* we heard students from other schools. Now think about students in YOUR school.

What percentage do you think...	Grades:	K - 1	2 - 3	4 - 5
1. Have heard the word 'gay?'				
2. Have heard the word 'lesbian?'				
3. Think they know what 'gay' means?				
4. Accurately understand the word 'gay?'				
5. Have gay and lesbian relatives and family friends?				
6. Have heard 'gay' as an insult, like "That's so gay?"				
7. Will go to a teacher if teased with the word 'gay?'				
8. Will interrupt other students who use 'gay' as an insult?				
9. Want teachers to have clear guidelines about teasing?				
10. Want teachers to define 'gay' and 'lesbian' in context of caring relationships?				

Have You Ever Thought About How You Might Respond: Practicing Responses to Questions about LGBT Topics

This exercise, found in the *Welcoming Schools Guide*, provides participants with an opportunity to imagine how they would respond to questions that students might ask. In our experiences with *Welcoming Schools* workshops we have found that educators and administrators appreciate the chance to practice responding to these questions in a supportive environment. They can stumble over their words and hear how their colleagues would address the questions. The exercise in the guide has a set of questions that you could substitute with the following questions directly related to the film. (See [Skills Building Exercise for Educators \(PDF\)](#))

- “Does ‘gay’ mean something bad?”
- “Are people born gay, or does it happen like an infection?”
- “Being gay is nasty.”
- “My cousin is marrying a girl. Do you think it’s weird for a girl to marry a girl?”
- “Why does he have two moms and no dad?”
- “Can you tell someone is gay by just looking at them?”
- You overhear a child say to a girl, “Your sister is a lesbian. Does that mean you will be too?”
- “I didn’t mean anything bad when I called him ‘gay.’ Everyone uses that word to tease each other! It’s no big deal.”
- You overhear a child say, “That’s so gay.”
- “Are we not allowed to say the word ‘gay’? Why? My cousin is gay.”
- “I try to tell the other kids to stop using the word ‘gay’ like that, but they won’t listen to me.”

(See [Students’ Responses and Samples Questions](#) for more sample responses.)

FILM AUDIENCES

VII. TALKING WITH ADMINISTRATORS

Some administrators may be leading the effort, or may be part of a team committed to the effort to develop a more welcoming school. Other administrators may be interested in finding out how the topics raised in *What Do You Know?* and in *Welcoming Schools* connect with the goals and missions of their schools. If you are meeting with an administrator to establish the need for being LGBT inclusive, you may want to clarify how you will:

1. Define your goals and scope of work
2. Be sensitive to the needs of this particular school
3. Deal with concerns as they arise and
4. Connect to current initiatives/goals of the school or district.

"You cannot watch the film What Do You Know? without being impressed with ... the wisdom of the students featured in the film. At the same time, the students tell us what we already know. If we want to run successful, high-achieving schools we need to ensure that all students are respected."

— Bill Kowba, superintendent, San Diego Unified School District

If you have enough time, the full *What Do You Know?* film (13 min) and the DVD special feature, *Teachers Respond*, can help establish the need for LGBT-inclusive initiatives and share a range of experiences with an emphasis on how teachers can make a difference. If you only have a short amount of time scheduled with an administrator, the two-minute *What Do You Know?* [film trailer](#) can also help you make a case for why schools can benefit from the *Welcoming Schools* approach.

Specifically, the two-minute trailer illustrates four specific reasons for schools to embark on LGBT-inclusive initiatives:

1. Children have heard the word ‘gay’ - typically in insults and slurs targeted at themselves or fellow classmates - starting in kindergarten.
2. Children who have gay relatives, friends and families may feel unsafe at school when they hear these slurs.
3. Children want teachers and administrators to “do something,” to educate their classmates, to make school feel safe.
4. Teachers and school staff can make a difference.

Administrators can then use these same points to explain the importance of this work to their larger community of parents/families, school board members or local citizens.

The 13-minute film and the four-minute *Teachers Respond* special feature explore ways that teachers and administrators can make their own school safer.

(See [Your Role as an Educator](#) or [Your Role as a School Administrator](#))

1. Interrupt insults and slurs using the words ‘gay,’ ‘faggot,’ or ‘lesbian’
2. Acknowledge and reflect the variety of family structures
3. Model accurate and respectful ways to discuss the meaning of the words ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’

VIII. TALKING WITH PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

All parents want schools to be welcoming of their children. If you are showing *What Do You Know?* to a group of parents or guardians, they might be concerned that:

1. Their child is being teased.
2. Their child is being accused of bullying others.
3. Their child is being exposed to values different from the parent’s values at home.
4. Their child is learning about things that are not age appropriate.
5. Their child might ask them questions that they won’t know how to answer.

“The film will help parents and make our schools safe, welcoming and inclusive for all children and their families.”

– Stan Griffith, president of Greater Boston PFLAG

The *Welcoming Schools Guide* includes a series of ideas and exercises for family programs. Depending on the goals of your program, you may want to start looking there for activities to accompany screening this film. The following are some introductory discussion prompts to create a discussion among the entire group, or in smaller clusters that break out and then report back.

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. *As you were watching the film, what stood out for you or was surprising?*
2. *Did anything in this film raise concerns for your child or your child’s classroom?*
3. *A number of children in the film mentioned they asked their mom what gay meant. Raise your hand if you have discussed these issues with your child. What did you sense worked well in the discussion, and what do you wish you had done differently?*
4. *We hear students in the film suggest strategies to make schools more safe and welcoming for children with gay and lesbian parents and relatives. What ideas do you have to improve the school environment?*
5. *Several students describe how they ask other students not to say “that’s gay.” What do we need to do to support children interrupting other children’s negative behaviors? Can you recall interrupting anti-gay comments or jokes yourself? Describe the experience. What was in place to support you?*
6. *How can you, as a member of the school community, support your school in being a safe and inclusive place for all kids to learn and grow?*

ROLE PLAYS FOR PARENTS

Break group into pairs, having each person take a turn playing the parents and the child. Use the following prompts for everyone to do the same role play and then discuss.

1. **Child:** *What does ‘gay’ mean? I heard someone called that today.*
2. **Child:** *I met someone with two moms. How could they have two moms?*
3. **Child:** *My teacher said it is wrong to say the word ‘gay?’ Why can’t I say it?*
4. **Child:** *My friend is going to a wedding where his cousin, who is a girl, is marrying another girl. Can they do that?*

5. **Child:** *I know a boy who wants to take ballet lessons. My best friend says that makes him gay. Does it?*
6. **Child:** *Other kids keep calling my friend gay. It bothers me and I want them to stop. What can I do?*
7. **Parent:** *Do you know what the word ‘gay’ means?*

IX. USING FILM’S SPECIAL FEATURE, *TEACHERS RESPOND*

Teachers Respond is a four-minute special feature on the DVD and website featuring four classroom educators. These teachers have taught children from kindergarten through sixth grade. Many educators attending our trainings are reassured to hear how other educators have been caught off guard and unprepared in the classroom. Many appreciate hearing that, with training and support, they can respond confidently to student questions or remarks and proactively create a welcoming classroom.

Depending on the size of the group and time available, you may want to use the following discussion and role-play exercises to create a discussion among the entire group, or in smaller clusters who break out and then report back.

“All school personnel who want to create safe and equitable schools will benefit from watching the film ‘What Do You Know’. The film gives us concrete tools to help interrupt anti-gay name-calling, support all families and students, and perhaps most importantly, listen to what students have to say.”

– David Sanchez, past president of the California Teachers Association,

TEACHERS RESPOND POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. *The first teacher discusses not knowing whether or not she had support to discuss gays and lesbians. What is the situation in your school or district? If you don’t feel safe to discuss with students, what would you need to have in place so that you do?*
2. *The first teacher also describes being caught off guard and feeling unprepared. Could anyone share a time they felt unprepared for a child’s question and a time they felt more prepared?*
3. *The phys ed teacher talks about hearing something on the playground and pulling a student aside to talk about it. What are the pros and cons to discussing these issues one-on-one with a student versus in a large group?*
4. *The male kindergarten teacher responds to a child explaining to another child what gay and lesbian mean. Has anyone talked to kindergarteners about gays and lesbians? If not, are you able to imagine it? What are your reactions to his comment that parents want teachers to respond to these topics when they come up, but not make a big deal about it? Do you imagine you would answer this question any differently depending on whether or not the student had a gay or lesbian parent or sibling?*
5. *The last teacher proactively talks to his fourth grade class about this issue every year – writing the words on the board and describing them. Why might he make this choice? He also explains why talking about gays and lesbians is not talking about sex. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?*

Note: Some audiences have responded to the last teacher who tells his students that being gay is related to grown up romantic love and that as fourth graders they don’t have to worry about that. Out of context, this teacher’s quote can seem like he’s saying that being

gay is something to worry about – but not at such a young age. If this comes up in a discussion, acknowledge the discomfort with that sentence, while validating that this teacher’s overarching message is one of acceptance. Invite audience members to rephrase the sentence in a way that conveys a positive message.

TEACHERS RESPOND POST-SCREENING ROLE PLAYS

1. **Parent to Teacher:** “My child has two moms. How do you make your class welcoming?”
2. **Parent to Teacher:** “My child told me he got sent to the office for saying ‘That’s so gay.’ But he told me he was just joking and that all the kids joke that way. Why was he singled out?”
3. **Parent to Teacher:** “My daughter says she has heard negative things about lesbians ever since her sister came out. She is being teased about becoming a lesbian herself. What can the school do?”
4. **Parent to Teacher:** “I heard that the music teacher told the fourth grade class she is a lesbian. Do you think that is appropriate for fourth graders to hear?”
5. **Administrator to Teacher:** “I heard you discussed the terms gay and lesbian in class today. Why did you do that?”
6. **Parent to Teacher:** “My seven year old is being teased for being too girly. I will only buy him boys’ toys and I’ve enrolled him on a hockey team. Do you have any other ideas how I can help him?”
7. **Parent to Teacher:** “My seven-year-old is being teased for being too girl, but he loves to wear pink and to dance around. It’s just the way he is. Can you do something so kids don’t tease him so much?”

RESOURCES

X. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM *WELCOMING SCHOOLS*

Visit the *Welcoming Schools* website at www.welcomingschools.org.

- Ideas for Developing a More Welcoming School
 - [Getting Started](#)
 - Your Role as:
 - [Educator](#)
 - [School Administrator](#)
 - [Librarian](#)
 - [Parent or Caring Adult](#)
 - [Gender and Children: A Place to Begin](#)
- [Professional Development Tools](#)
- [Community Building Ideas for Parent/Guardian Involvement in Your School](#)
- [Lesson Plans for Grades K–5](#) - on Embracing Family Diversity, Looking at Gender Stereotyping and Stopping Bullying
- [Recommended Books for Students](#) - Short Lists of Recommendations and Longer Annotated Lists
 - Families: All Kinds of Family Diversity, LGBT-inclusive books, Immigration and Families
 - Gender: Gender Stereotyping, Gender Identity, Bullying and Gender, Biographies with Role Models for Girls and Boys
 - Bullying: Books that look at ways to deal with bullying and bias-based bullying in particular, Bullying and Gender, Anti-Bullying Books that are LGBT inclusive.
- [Welcoming Schools Pilot and Evaluation Results](#)

XI. LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Over the next few months, we will be collecting case studies on how the film is used in these and other contexts. Please e-mail us with your story about how you have or would like to use this film to help you with:

- Implementing *Welcoming Schools*
- Supporting bullying prevention
- Building cultural competence
- Expanding social and emotional learning programs.

E-mail us at welcomingschools@hrc.org.



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