

Thursday, February 16, 2023



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

WELCOMING SCHOOLS

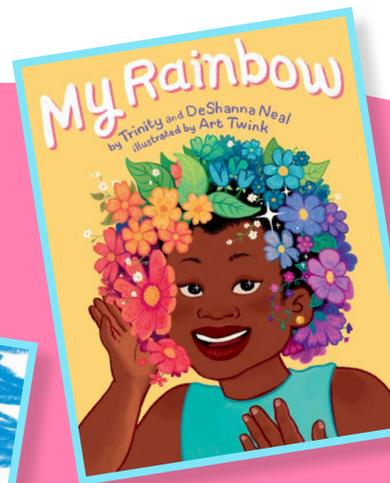
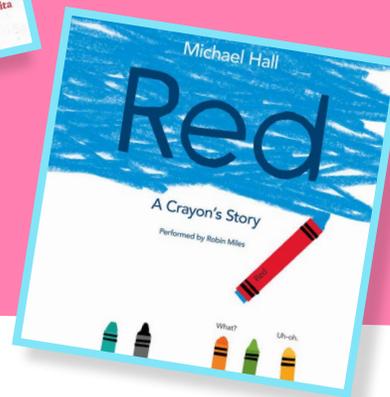
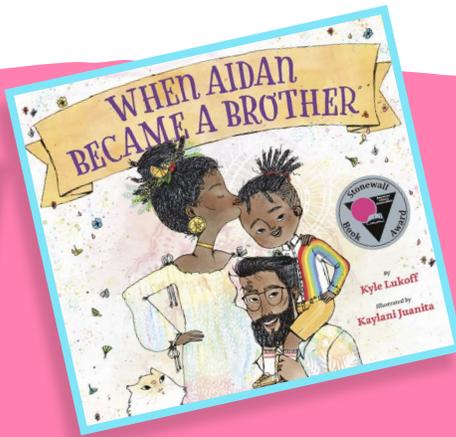
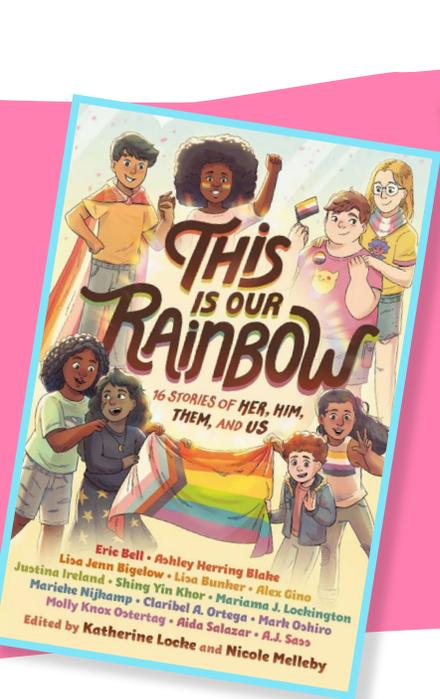


NATIONAL DAY of READING



A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Youth

Organizing Toolkit



Why Is This Event Important?

While the current climate of our nation can make it difficult to instill positive change and provide the necessary support for our LGBTQ+ students, we want to focus and uplift the fact that there are many supportive organizations, places of worship, schools and people who continue to show up for our transgender and non-binary youth. Data shows that there are many ways for each and every one of us to stand up and affirm our youth. Supportive practices, such as using a person's name and pronouns correctly, supporting their gender expression and providing access to LGBTQ+ affirming spaces, increase feelings of safety and belonging and significantly reduce negative outcomes, including suicide ideation and attempts.

In this eighth year of the event, the Welcoming Schools National Day of Reading: A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender & Non-Binary Youth, our hope is that these readings will inspire caring community members to join together to advocate for the rights of transgender and non-binary youth and ensure that every child has the support needed to thrive and be their whole self in their school and community.

Whether you read one or all of the suggested stories to your child or grandchild, to a small group of people, to a classroom or facilitate a large organized event, whether it is in-person or virtual, every reading matters and can make a difference in the life of a transgender and/or non-binary youth.

HRC's Welcoming Schools program thanks you for joining us in our aspiration to create safe and inclusive environments where all our youth feel seen, valued and respected.

Event History

In late 2015, an elementary school in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, planned a reading and discussion of a children's book as part of their efforts to support one of the school's students — a six-year-old transgender child who had recently socially transitioned and was attending the school openly as the girl she knew herself to be. The book, *I Am Jazz*, is a picture book based on early experiences of transgender youth and advocate Jazz Jennings.

Prior to the reading, an anti-LGBTQ hate group learned of the event and threatened to sue the school, calling for the school to cancel the discussion. But the Mount Horeb community rallied behind the school and their transgender student.

A parent in the community organized a reading of *I Am Jazz* at the local library. The audience — full of children, parents, grandparents and community members — put courage before fear and turned out to learn more about how they could support the full humanity of transgender children and youth in their own backyard.

In 2016, communities all across the nation hosted their own events — inspired by the Mount Horeb community. They were held in schools, libraries, churches, temples and bookstores. *I Am Jazz* was even read aloud on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The evolution of this event has resulted in numerous names over time, beginning with *I Am Jazz*, broadening the stories with *Jazz and Friends*, and now, for the first time, including stories for youth of all ages in our National Day of Reading: A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender & Non-Binary Youth. Regardless of the name, the goal of the event has always stayed the same: for communities and schools to come together to show their support for transgender and non-binary youth.



How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be a resource for community members, educators and youth-serving professionals interested in creating welcoming and affirming spaces for transgender and non-binary youth through the reading of inclusive literature, such as *Red: A Crayon's Story*, *My Rainbow*, *When Aidan Became a Brother*, *Petra & Pearl* and *notes on the seasons*.

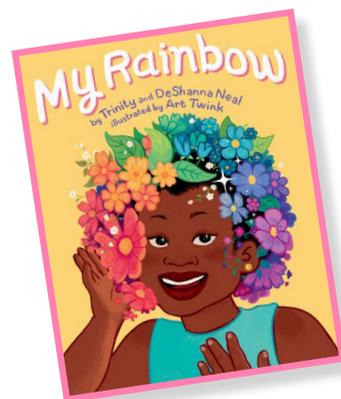
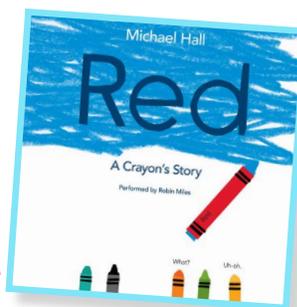
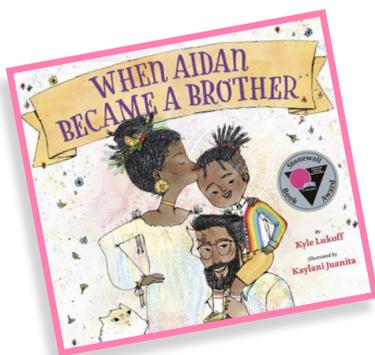
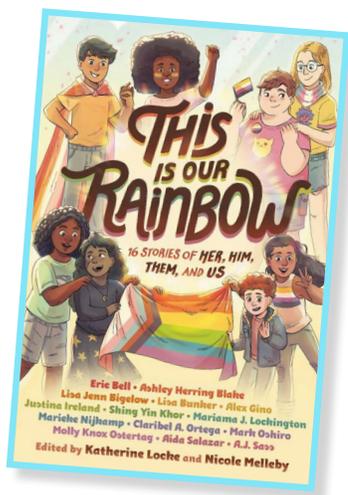
The toolkit provides information and recommendations for hosting a reading, collaborating with community partners, discussion guides for each of the selected texts and sample social media posts. We encourage you to use the resources to meet the needs of your group and community. For additional information and resources, please visit the Welcoming Schools website at www.welcomingschools.org.

“ The goal of the event has always stayed the same: for communities and schools to come together to show their support for transgender and non-binary youth. ”

— Cheryl Greene (she/her)
Director, Welcoming Schools

Which Stories Will You Read?

This year we will be highlighting: *Red: A Crayon's Story*, *My Rainbow*, *When Aidan Became a Brother*, *Petra & Pearl* and *notes on the seasons*. You may want to read one, two or all five.



Host a Reading

Classroom or School-Wide Reading. Sharing stories of transgender and non-binary youth is an essential part of creating welcoming and inclusive classrooms and schools. By guiding discussions about gender with students, educators, families and other caring adults, you can help to prevent bias-based bullying, harassment and gender stereotyping.

When hosting a reading, consider the following:

- + Check out the '[Additional Considerations](#)' section.
- + Be proactive! Communicate with families about the reading via classroom or school newsletters.
- + Use the discussion guides found in our organizing toolkit with your selected text.

Community Reading. Organize a reading from your home, library, bookstore, place of worship or neighborhood center.

When hosting an in-person reading, consider the following:

- + How many people do you have space for?
- + How are you inviting folks to join in the reading? Fliers, social media, emails, etc.
- + Who will read the selected text?
- + How will you engage the participants?

When hosting a virtual reading, consider the following:

- + What platform will you use?
- + How many people can you host with your virtual account?
- + Consider co-hosting with a local organization that can host more people on their virtual account.

Tips for Securing Virtual Readings

- + Have a co-host who can monitor chat and remove any disrespectful participants.
- + Don't use your personal meeting ID.
- + Have participants register for your event.
- + Use a password.
- + Use the waiting room feature.
- + Check your meeting settings. Turn off screen sharing and personal chat. Zoom has a great guide [here](#).

Collaboration with Community Partners

- + Consider co-hosting with local LGBTQ+ organizations, libraries, places of worship and/or other affirming community organizations.
- + The reader or readers could be local LGBTQ+ leaders, school board members, LGBTQ+ allies, librarians, faith-based leaders, elected officials, students from local GSAs or family members who affirm their LGBTQ+ loved ones.
- + Partners can help you to publicize the event and may have the ability to provide financial support for copies of the books to mail to participants. Partners may also have a Zoom account that supports more participants than a personal account.

Engaging With the Resource Guides

Using the resource guides for this year's selected stories will enhance the reader's experience and understanding.

The elementary resources include:

- + Multiple books to choose from
- + Information about the authors
- + Book overviews
- + Discussion questions
- + Multiple activities from which to choose

The secondary resources include:

- + Information about the authors
- + Story overviews
- + Discussion questions
- + Writing prompts

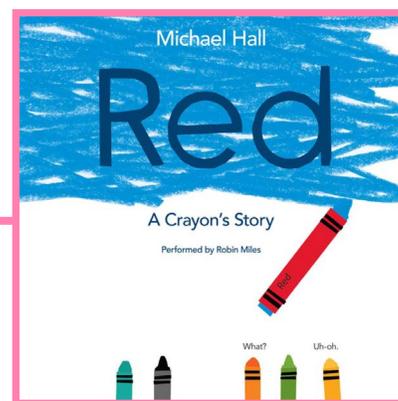
This year's toolkit also includes a coloring page designed by Shurjo Mukhi (they/them). Extend the learning experience by offering students of all ages an opportunity to engage through artistic expression. Appropriate for all ages.



Elementary Discussion Prompts

Red: A Crayon's Story

By Michael Hall (he/him)



About the Author

Michael Hall is a New York Times bestselling author and illustrator. Before becoming a children's author, Michael was an award-winning graphic designer whose work has been widely recognized for its simple and engaging approach.

About the Book

This story follows the journey of Red, a crayon with a bright red label, who is in fact blue. Red's teacher, mother, and classmates all try to help him be red. But Red is miserable. He just can't be red, no matter how hard he tries! Finally, a brand-new friend offers a new perspective, and Red discovers what readers have known all along. He's blue!

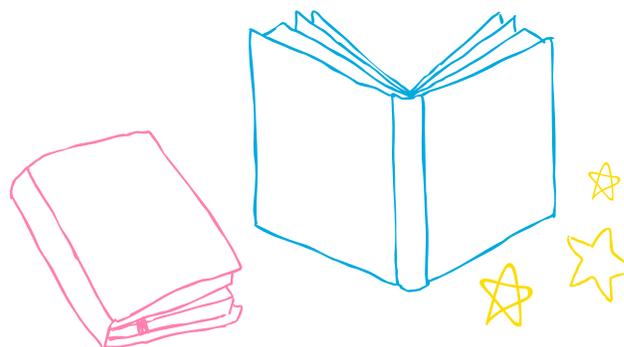
Discussion Questions

- + In the story it says, "He was red. But he wasn't very good at it." What does it mean that he wasn't very good at it? What is happening?
- + At the end of the story, it was easy for Red to draw the water. What has changed?
- + Can you think of examples or share an identity or a part of yourself that others may not know about you just by looking at you?
- + What do you think the author's message is to the reader?

Activities

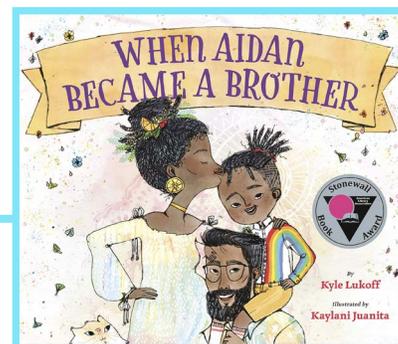
- + There's More To Me Than You Can See Crayon Project
 - See [template](#) to complete this activity. Pick a crayon template that works best for your students, provide alternative options or allow students to choose their template.
 - Print template on white paper and have students color their outside wrapper or print on colored paper and allow them to choose which color they want.
 - Encourage students to follow the writing prompts or to record three things that people may not know about them just by looking at them.

- Cut around the outside of the crayon and on the solid line on the outside of the wrapper.
- Model for students where to cut and where to fold on the crayon wrapper.
- Secure the wrapper around the crayon with glue or tape. The student's writing should be concealed underneath.
- + Play "Just Like Me!" with one person or a group of people. Have one person share something that is true about them that others would not know just by looking at them (ex: likes, dislikes, pieces of their identity, etc.). Have other participants stand up/clap/snap if the statement also applies to them. Encourage participants to notice what they have in common with others and what makes them unique.



When Aidan Became A Brother

By Kyle Lukoff (he/him), Illustrated by Kaylani Juanita (she/her)



About the Author

Kyle Lukoff writes books for kids and other people. Before becoming a full-time writer, Kyle worked at five bookstores, in four libraries, for three schools, as two genders, through one intersection: people and books.

About the Book

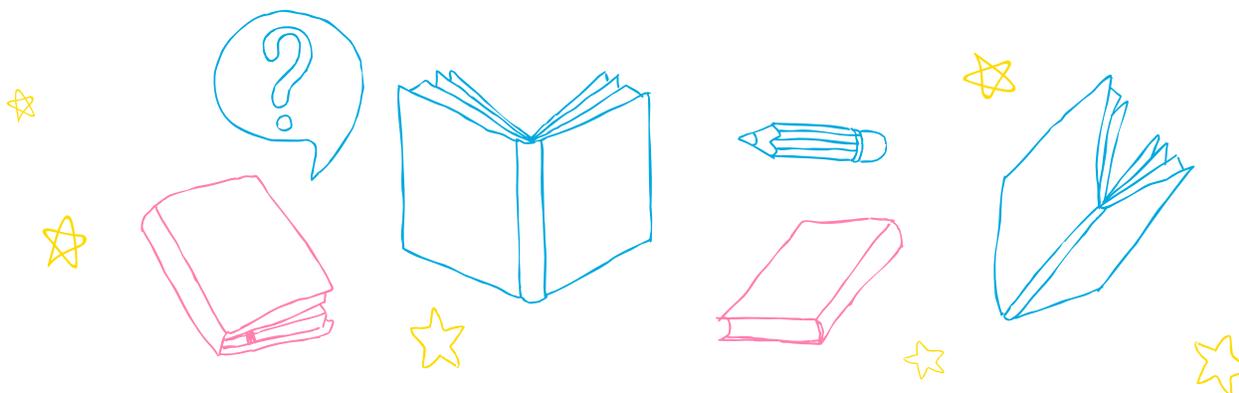
When Aidan was born, everyone thought he was a girl. His parents gave him a pretty name, his room looked like a girl's room and he wore clothes that other girls liked wearing. After he realized he was a trans boy, Aidan and his parents fixed the parts of his life that didn't fit anymore and he settled happily into his new life. *When Aidan Became a Brother* is a heartwarming book that will resonate with transgender children, reassure any child concerned about becoming an older sibling, and celebrate the many transitions a family can experience.

Discussion Questions

- + What does it mean to be transgender?
- + What did Aidan's parents do to fix the parts of his life that didn't fit anymore?
- + Aidan explored different ways of being a boy. What are some of the things he did to show the world how he wanted to be a boy? Look at the illustrations for clues.
- + Aidan was concerned about getting everything right for the new baby. What were some of the things that he worried about?
- + What are some things Aidan and his parents did to get ready for the new baby?

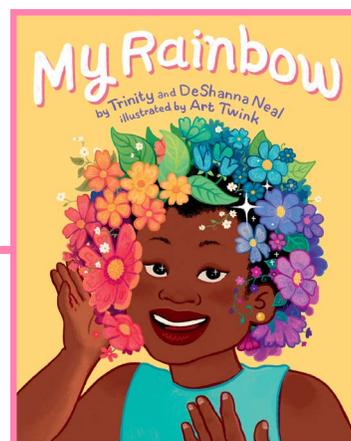
Activities

- + Make a list of some of the things that you do to show the world who you are inside.
- + Pretend that a family is expecting a baby. Draw a picture or make a collage of a bedroom that could make someone who is a boy, girl, both or neither comfortable and happy. Explore some of the toys and furnishings you would put into the room.
- + What names would you choose to pick from for a new baby? We think of many names as "boy names" and "girl names", but that doesn't include all the genders that people can be. Make a list of names that you would like for a baby who might be a boy, girl, both or neither.



My Rainbow

By Trinity Neal (she/her) and DeShanna Neal (they/them),
Illustrated by Art Twink (they/them)



About the Authors

DeShanna and Trinity Neal are a parent-child team of writers, advocates for black and transgender rights and awareness and have been featured in major publications such as *National Geographic*, *The Advocate* and *Essence*. DeShanna and Trinity write to foster understanding between transgender, cisgender and non-binary children.

About the Book

A dedicated mom puts love into action as she creates the perfect rainbow-colored wig for her transgender daughter, based on the real-life experience of parent-child advocate duo Trinity and DeShanna Neal.

Discussion Questions

- + What does the term transgender mean? Think about how Trinity described herself.
- + How does Trinity's family show that they love and support her?
- + Why is having longer hair so important to Trinity?
- + What do the rainbow colors in Trinity's new wig represent?

Activities

- + Draw your own wig. What will it look like? Long, short, spiky, curly, colorful? How does it represent who you are?
- + In the story, Trinity's mom reminds her about some of the identities that make her special; transgender girl, black, autistic, sister, daughter. Make a list of some of the identities that make you special.
- + Find out about a celebrity who is transgender. What does that person do? What makes them special?
 - [20 of the Most Popular Transgender Celebrities](#)
 - [25 Transgender Celebrities Who Broke Barriers](#)
 - [Third Genders From Cultures Around The World](#)
 - [60+ Famous Transgender People](#)



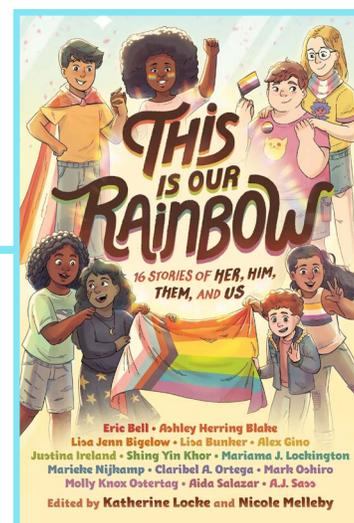
Online Read Aloud by the Author: HRC Welcoming Schools presents [“My Rainbow” read by Author DeShanna Neal - YouTube](#)

Secondary Discussion Prompts

Petra & Pearl

Short Story from *This Is Our Rainbow*

By Lisa Bunker (she/they)



About the Author

Lisa Bunker has written stories all her life. She lives in Sacramento, California with her wife. Between them they have three grown children. In 2018, Lisa was elected to represent her town in the New Hampshire House of Representatives, and was reelected in 2020. In their leisure time, she sings, plays bass, plays chess and studies languages.

About the Book

Through an online friendship, Petra and Pearl learn to support each other as they strive to live authentically. As they navigate school and family, they empower one another to share their true transgender identities with those they love.

Reflection Options

There are two options to engage students in reflection on the story: discussion prompts and writing prompts. Educators are encouraged to identify the method and questions that will best support their students' learning. Some of the prompts reflect on personal identity and may be sensitive topics for some students to discuss, either verbally or in writing. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students are offered more than one of the prompts from which to choose, allowing for the selection and reflection on the one that resonates most with them.

Discussion Prompts

- + After connecting online, Petra and Pearl's connection and friendship developed into a bond that was above and beyond their other friendships. What makes an online friendship easier? What makes it more difficult?
- + 'Transgender' is the word Pearl and Petra use to describe a piece of their identity. What does it mean? Additionally, the story implies that the majority of the people in Pearl and Petra's lives are 'cisgender'. What does that word mean?
- + Bullying can force people to hide parts of their identity. Can the different social groups that exist at school play a part in bullying? If so, how?

Writing Prompts

- + What do you think the author's message is to the reader? Share evidence from the text to support your idea. (This might take the form of a book jacket blurb.)
- + In the story, Pearl and Petra are both grappling with their transgender identities. What are some of the identities that you hold that have the greatest impact on your life at this time? (This might take the form of a journal entry.)
- + In the story, Pearl says to Petra, "I've got you. You are a true friend. So, thank you for being there when I needed someone" (page 84). What are some of the qualities that Petra portrayed that allowed her to support Pearl in her time of need? (This might take the form of a letter from one character to the other.)
- + What qualities do you possess that make you a good friend? Share examples of how these qualities, such as being a good listener, your honesty, etc., can show up in your friendships.

notes on the seasons/ notas sobre las temporadas

A Poem by Raquel Salas Rivera (he/they)



About the Author

Raquel Salas Rivera is a Puerto Rican, neurodivergent, trans poet, editor and translator. They write in Spanish and English, focusing on the experience of being a migrant to the United States, the colonial status of Puerto Rico and of identifying as a queer Puerto Rican and Philadelphian of non-binary gender. Raquel served as a Poet Laureate of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2019.

About the Poem, From the Author

“This poem was my attempt to answer the claims that there was no place for inclusive language in Spanish, and, more specifically, that there was no place for non-binary pronouns because Spanish was so binary. Every time I heard this argument, it infuriated me because it reminded me of even older statements that similarly claimed that being trans is not natural, that we don’t exist, and that we can’t exist. Yet, here I am, existing.”

[Click here to view the poem.](#)

Reflection Options

There are two sets of options to engage students in reflection on the poem: discussion prompts and writing prompts. Educators are encouraged to identify the method and questions that will best support their students’ learning. These prompts are designed to be used individually or in combination to help students explore the deeper meanings of the poem and the poet’s motivations and techniques.

One of the prompts will explore figurative language and how it is used to express the motivations of the poet. A review prior to exploring the poem might be helpful. Some of the prompts require introspection and may surface sensitive topics for some students to discuss, either verbally or in writing. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students are offered more than one of the prompts from which to choose, allowing for the selection and reflection on the one that resonates most with each individual.

Discussion Prompts

- + How does the metaphor of the lion, snake and spider connect with the author’s message?
- + How do you interpret the meaning of [transmogrification](#) and how does it apply to your life?
- + Which line or stanza resonates most with you? How does this section of the piece impact you? What emotions do you feel? Why?

Writing Prompts

- + Write a letter to the author highlighting parts of the poem that resonated most with you and share why.
- + What questions do you have for the author about the poem? What would you like to know more about?
- + After reading the letters to the author and the author’s response, what did you learn about the theme of the poem?

- + [Letters to and Responses from the Author](#)
- + [Author Online English Video](#)
- + [Author Online Video](#) (Spanish reading starts at 0:20, English reading starts at 2:30)

Coloring Page



Shurjo Mukhi (they/them) is a multimedia artist that hopes to always create and reimagine with community — to use art as a way to manifest healthy loves and ways of being in real and dream worlds.

Organizing Tips

How Will You Promote Your Event?

- Publicize on Social Media.
 - Create an Event Page to encourage people to RSVP.
 - Add images to your posts to make them more engaging and fun.
 - Hashtag #ReadForTransKids to build awareness of your event.
- Invite local leaders (e.g. elected officials, school board members, supportive community members, local leaders of LGBTQ+ organizations, etc.) and ask them to help promote your event.
- Share information about your event on a listserv, on Instagram, or in relevant Facebook groups. Are you part of a listserv of parents or a listserv for your congregation, school or community?
- Submit to your local community calendar. Most outlets allow you to do this via a website.

Final Preparations for the Reading

- Send a reminder about the event the day before and the day of the reading to encourage people to prioritize attending the reading.
- Plan for the event's flow:
 - Develop a time and content outline.
 - Decide who will introduce the reader.
 - Decide who will lead a discussion based on the guides for each story.



Additional Considerations

- + Think about having people customize their zoom profile to include their name and pronouns (if they use them).
- + Before the reader begins to read, make sure to introduce them and say what pronouns they use.
- + Remember that you cannot know how someone identifies based on how they look (their gender expression). Be mindful at your event to model how to respectfully ask people their name and pronouns.
- + Learn basic vocabulary before hosting your event.
- + Welcoming Schools has a helpful resource for defining [LGBTQ+ Words for Children](#).
- + Know that gender identity, who you love or are attracted to (sexual orientation) and assignment at birth (sex assigned at birth) are different. Welcoming Schools has a helpful lesson plan, [The Gender Snowperson](#), that highlights important terminology about the differences between sexual orientation and gender identity that you will want to understand before hosting.
- + If someone asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it is perfectly OK to say that you don't know.
- + Transgender and non-binary bodies are private!
 - It is not appropriate for someone to ask questions about surgeries or physical bodies at a book reading for youth.
- + Pronoun Resources from the Human Rights Campaign -
 - [All Children-All Families Pronouns 101](#)
 - [Understanding Neopronouns](#)
 - [Talking About Pronouns in the Workplace](#)

Sample Social Media

Using social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can boost attendance at your reading. Here are some sample posts you can use on your own social media accounts!

Twitter:

Support transgender and non-binary youth by joining me for @HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools #ReadForTransKids on February 16 at [LOCATION].

Join me and @HRC's Welcoming Schools program on February 16 for the #ReadForTransKids. Let's come together to show our support for trans and non-binary youth. [EVENT LINK] 📖 ❤️ 🌈 📖

📖 SAVE ❤️ THE 🌈 DATE: On February 16, join me and @HRC Welcoming Schools to support trans and non-binary youth by reading in our community. #ReadForTransKids. [EVENT LINK]

📖 Don't forget to join your community on February 16 in reading inclusive books to show your support for transgender and non-binary youth with @HRC Foundation's Welcoming Schools! #ReadForTransKids [EVENT LINK]

Facebook:

Support transgender and non-binary youth by joining me for the National Day of Reading: A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender & Non-Binary Youth on February 16 at [LOCATION]. [EVENT LINK]

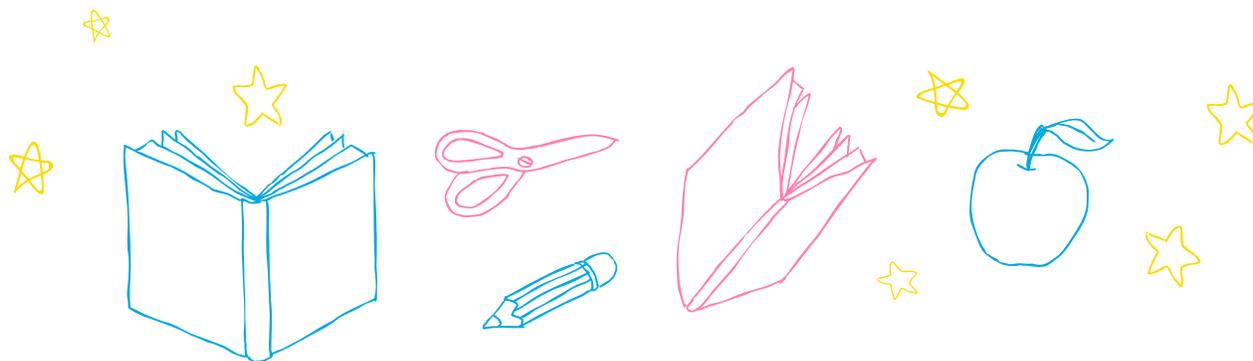
Join me and HRC's Welcoming Schools on February 16 for National Day of Reading: A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender & Non-Binary Youth. Let's come together to show our support for trans and non-binary youth in our community. [EVENT LINK]

Don't forget to join me and show your support for transgender and non-binary youth on February 16! [EVENT LINK]

How to create a Facebook event:

Click "Events" in the left menu of your Facebook News Feed and click "Create Event".

- + Decide if you would like to make the event public or private.
- + Fill in the event name, details, location and time.
- + Consider adding a photo to make your event stand out.
- + You'll then be taken to the event page where you can invite guests by clicking on "Share", upload photos, share posts and edit event details.
- + As the big day approaches, don't forget to post on the event page to remind people to attend!



Instagram:

TIP: On Instagram, links are not clickable in your captions; the only clickable place is in your bio. If you want to promote your event on Instagram, we suggest you include your event link in your bio. To do so, click “edit profile” on your profile and drop in your website link.

Don't forget to join me and support transgender and non-binary youth on February 16! RSVP at the link in my bio.

SAVE THE DATE: On February 16, join me and HRC's Welcoming Schools to support trans and non-binary youth by reading inclusive books in our community.

Possible hashtags to add into your caption:

#LGBTQ+ #LGBT #Youth #Trans #Transgender
#TransYouth #ReadForTransKids #WelcomingSchools

Instagram Stories:

TIP: This is a fun and different way to promote your event! When on your newsfeed, swipe right to create a series of “stories” that will be viewable to your followers for 24 hours.

Upload a photo of a flier, book or piece of promotional material. Then you can add text and include gifs, tag your location or get creative with things like music and countdown stickers.

SAVE THE DATE: On February 16, join me and HRC's Welcoming Schools program to support trans and non-binary youth by reading in our community.

Across the country, people, schools and organizations will be hosting readings with HRC's Welcoming Schools program and I'm hosting one at [LOCATION].

These are community readings to embrace inclusion and acceptance.

Don't forget to join me and support transgender and non-binary youth on February 16! Check out the link in my bio to RSVP.

Other Social Tips and Tricks:

Adding #ReadForTransKids photos to your posts can make them more engaging and fun.

Remember to post about your event more than once and more often as it gets closer to the big day. Also link it to your Facebook event (if you have one).

If you'd like your posts and photos to be shared by HRC, please:

- + Tag us on Twitter and Instagram and use the hashtag #ReadForTransKids
 - Twitter: [@HRC](#)
 - Instagram: [@HumanRightsCampaign](#)
- + Send any photos you take at your event to photos@hrc.org.

