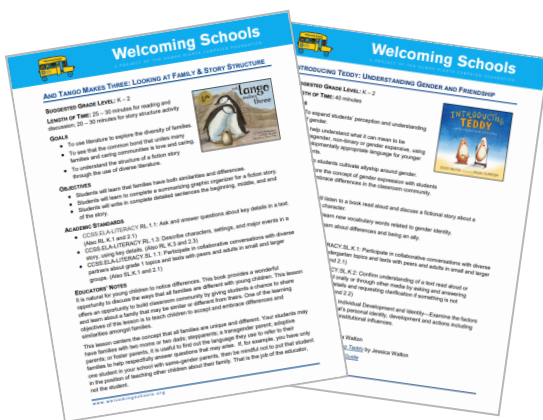


Why Say Gay? K-3 Lessons & Resources

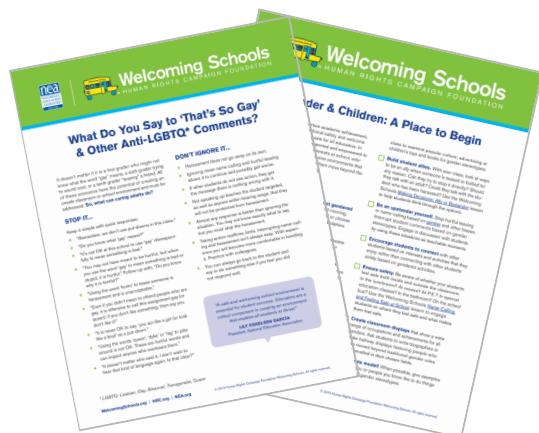
Developing safe and respectful learning environments is critical to ensuring that all students thrive, academically and emotionally. Students must have all of their intersecting identities affirmed and nurtured in order for this to happen, *including* identities tied to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Using inclusive language and providing representation of all families are simple ways educators can affirm students' identities. Many students have family members who are LGBTQ+ and all family members and family structures must be welcomed, accepted and included in the school community in order for students to be able to engage in the joy of learning.



Lesson Plans

Welcoming Schools' lesson plans correspond to our program's areas of emphasis. These lessons are designed to be delivered to students in large and small groups and meet Common Core Standards for subjects in grades K-3, including Language Arts. Student resources are age appropriate and are designed to encourage creativity, critical thinking and decision making.



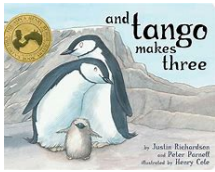
Resources to Empower Educators

Educators sometimes face pushback when implementing lessons that teach students to appreciate diversity and that encourage allyship in early elementary classrooms. These resources give educators the tools and talking points to address reluctance from parents, caregivers and administrators.

“Children need to see and be seen, hear and be heard, understand and be understood, accept and be accepted.”

- Welcoming Schools National Facilitator Toni Smith

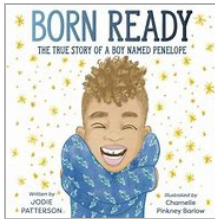
BOOKS WITH LESSON PLANS



[And Tango Makes Three: Looking at Family & Story Structure](#)

Use this cute story of two male penguins and their baby to discuss family diversity and story structure.

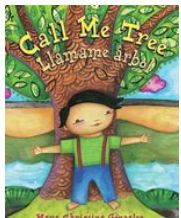
Topic: LGBTQ+ Families



[Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope](#)

Penelope's experiences show children that it always makes you stronger when you are true to yourself and who you really are.

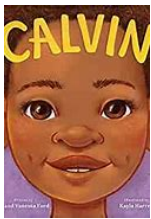
Topic: Gender Identity



[Call Me Tree/Llámame árbol: Exploring a Gender Free Book](#)

Call Me Tree/Llámame árbol offers an opportunity to build a classroom community by giving students a chance to learn about gender via a character in a book who does not use pronouns.

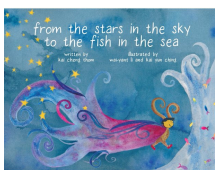
Topics: Gender Expression, Pronouns



[Calvin: Time to Be Me!](#)

Calvin has always been a boy, even if the world sees him as a girl. He knows who he is in his heart and in his mind, but he hasn't yet told his family. Finally, he can wait no longer.

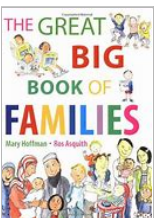
Topic: Gender Identity



[From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea](#)

In this beautifully imagined picture book about gender, identity, and the acceptance of the differences between us, Miu Lan faces many questions about who they are and who they may be. One thing's for sure: no matter what, their mother will love them.

Topic: Gender Identity



[The Great Big Book of Families: Discussion Guide](#)

The Great Big Book of Families showcases diverse families and their lives together. It's a great resource for reflecting the diversity of your students' families and highlighting diversity for all students. LGBTQ+ inclusive, multi-racial families, economic diversity.

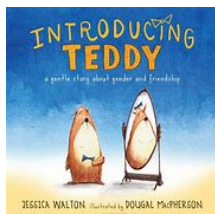
Topic: LGBTQ+ Families



[I Am Jazz: Transgender Topics in Elementary School](#)

The picture book, *I Am Jazz*, based on the life of Jazz Jennings, can help start a conversation with students on what it means to be transgender.

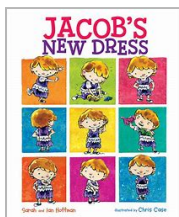
Topics: Gender Identity, Gender Expression



[Introducing Teddy: Understanding Gender and Friendship](#)

The book, *Introducing Teddy* and several fun activities help students understand concepts of gender identity and how to be a kind friend.

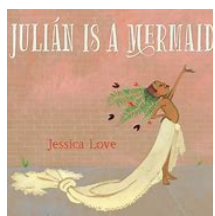
Topics: Gender Identity, Gender Expression



[Jacob's New Dress: Understanding Gender Expression](#)

Through the story of Jacob, students discuss gender expression and mean teasing based on gender.

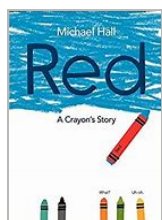
Topic: Gender Expression



[Julián Is a Mermaid: Understanding Gender Expression](#)

While in the subway with his abuela, Julián sees three women spectacularly dressed up and wants to dress up just like them. But what will his abuela think? A story about the power of being seen and affirmed.

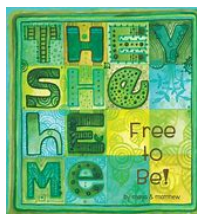
Topic: Gender Expression



[Red: A Crayon's Story –There's More To Me Than You Can See](#)

Red: A Crayon's Story provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss stereotypes based on appearance (gender, race, ability). Each student will create a self crayon that explores their inner identities.

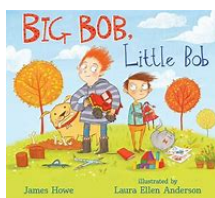
Topics: Gender Identity, Gender Stereotypes



[They, She, He, Me, Free to Be! Understanding Pronouns](#)

They, She, He, Me Free To Be! is a short diverse book about pronouns and gender expression. Students can also create an artistic pronoun to display in your classroom.

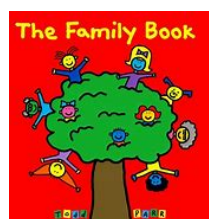
Topics: Gender Expression, Pronouns



[Using Children's Books to Look at Gender Stereotyping](#)

Find a fun way to talk about gender stereotypes and discrimination with activities paired with children's books.

Topic: Gender Stereotypes



[What is a Family?](#)

This introductory lesson uses children's own experiences and questions. You can use the lesson with any number of books featuring diverse families.

Topic: LGBTQ+ Families

RESOURCES TO EMPOWER EDUCATORS



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Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students

- When children ask questions about LGBTQ words, it is sometimes best to offer simple and direct answers.
- You might choose to answer a student's question with another question to figure out what they are really asking — is it about name calling, a classmate's two dads or something they saw on the internet? Listening first helps you respond.
- Using examples helps students understand definitions.
- Questions about LGBTQ words can provide teachable moments on topics like understanding difference and treating people with respect.
- If a student uses an LGBTQ term in a derogatory way, ask them if they know what it means. If they don't, give a short definition and explain how that term is hurtful and mean. Let them know they should not use it in that way.
- This list can serve as a starting place for educators to respond to questions about LGBTQ words. These suggested definitions can help to ensure that you feel confident in your own knowledge and ability to communicate these ideas to students.

Gender

Cisgender: When your gender identity (how you feel) is the same as what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).

Gender Binary: A way of seeing gender as two distinct and opposite groups — girl and boy. This idea doesn't include all the ways we can have a gender identity and express our gender.

Gender Expansive: Some people feel that the traditional ways of being a "boy" or "girl" do not fit for them. They live their lives showing that there are many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither.

Gender Expression: People express themselves in many ways, such as through clothes or hairstyles. Sometimes people think that these things go with certain genders, but really you cannot guess someone's gender or pronouns from how they look. In our school we respect that every person is unique and different, and we don't tease or bully anyone about their personal expression.

Gender Identity: How you feel. Girl, boy, both or neither. Everyone has a gender identity.

Intersex: An umbrella term that refers to people who are born with bodies that are naturally different from what is traditionally considered female or male. (This occurs in about 2% of babies born, similar to the percentage for redheads.)

Non-Binary: People who do not feel like the words "girl" or "boy" fits. They may feel like both or neither. They sometimes use pronouns such as they, them, theirs.

Sex Assigned At Birth: When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at the baby's body/anatomy and says they are a girl, boy or intersex.

Transgender or Trans: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).

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Gender & Children: A Place to Begin

Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students is a common goal for all educators. In order for students to feel supported and empowered to express their identities and interests at school, educators must create gender inclusive environments that both affirm all children and help them move beyond the limitations of gender stereotyping.

Checklist for a Gender Inclusive Classroom

- ☐ Use inclusive phrases that are not gendered to address your class, such as, "Good morning, everyone!" or "Good morning, scholars!" or choose and use a name for your class, like the Dolphins or the Owls.
- ☐ Develop classroom messages that emphasize "All children can... (dance, cook, have short or long hair, do math, make art, etc.)"
- ☐ Group students in ways that do not rely on gender, such as table groups, letters in their names or colors of their clothes. Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices, such as boys line up here and girls line up there.
- ☐ Provide role models. Show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people that move beyond gender-role stereotypes. [Read diverse biographies.](#)
- ☐ Read books to your class that teach about gender and break down stereotypes related to gender expression and gender identity.
- ☐ Use lesson plans designed to expand students' understanding of gender. Read books that encourage discussion of gender assumptions. Help students see the limitations of gender stereotyping. Ask your

class to examine popular culture, advertising or children's toys and books for gender stereotypes.

- ☐ Build student allies. With your class, look at ways to be an ally when someone is teased or bullied for any reason. Can they try to stop it directly? Should they talk with an adult? Could they talk with the student who has been harassed? Use the Welcoming Schools [Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander](#) lesson to help students think through the options.

- ☐ Be an upstander yourself. Stop hurtful teasing or name-calling based on gender and other biases. Interrupt student comments based on gender stereotypes. Engage in discussion with students by using these situations as teachable moments.

- ☐ Encourage students to connect with other students based on interests and activities that they enjoy rather than connecting with other students solely based on gendered activities.

- ☐ Ensure safety. Be aware of whether your students feel safe both inside and outside the classroom. In the lunchroom? At recess? At P.E.? In special education classes? In the bathroom? On the school bus? Use the Welcoming Schools [Name-Calling and Feeling Safe at School](#) lesson to engage students on where they feel safe and what makes them feel safe.

- ☐ Create classroom displays that show a wide range of occupations and achievements for all genders. Ask students to write biographies or make hallway displays featuring people who have moved beyond traditional gender roles and excelled in their chosen fields.

- ☐ Be a role model! When possible, give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes.

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Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students

Checklist- Gender and Children: A Place to Begin



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Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender

It is important to practice how to respond to questions related to gender and how to interrupt gender based teasing and bullying. Being prepared will help you embrace teachable moments with your students to foster a gender inclusive school.

"Why does Martin like pink?" (Martin identifies as a boy.)

- Here at (name of school) we all get to like what we like. What is your favorite color? Why do you like that color?
- There are so many beautiful colors, we can all like different ones.
- There is no such thing as boy colors or girl colors. Colors are colors. All people like different colors.
- It is not okay to tease people for the colors that they like. We are all different and we can like different colors that make us happy.

"Why is her hair so short? She looks like a boy."

- People of all genders can have long hair, medium hair or short hair. And some people do not have any hair.
- That's just how she likes it. How would you like your hair to be?
- Hair is hair. That is how she likes it.
- There is no such thing as "boy" hair or "girl" hair. Here at (name of school) we all get to have our hair the way that makes us happy.
- You cannot tell someone's gender from how they have their hair.

"Juan plays with dolls. That's weird." (Juan identifies as a boy.)

- It's true that some boys don't like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don't. Some of you like to play kickball and others don't. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because of their gender.
- The dolls are for all children in this classroom.
- Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some toys being for boys and some toys being for girls. They are just for kids!

You overhear a student say to another student who identifies as a girl, "You look like a boy."

- Why do you say that?
- There is no one way for girls or boys or people of any gender to act or look.
- Those are the kinds of clothes that she likes to wear. Why do you like to wear what you're wearing?
- Here at (name of school) we all get to wear what makes us happy and comfortable for learning and playing.

"But he's a boy, why does he dress like a girl?"

- There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress. There are lots of ways that people of any gender can dress.
- Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.
- There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).

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What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay' & Other Anti-LGBTQ* Comments?

It doesn't matter if it is a first grader who might not know what the word "gay" means, a sixth grader trying to sound cool, or a tenth grader "teasing" a friend. All of these scenarios have the potential of creating an unsafe classroom or school environment and must be addressed. **So, what can caring adults do?**

STOP IT...

Keep it simple with quick responses:

- "Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class."
- "Do you know what 'gay' means?"
- "It's not OK at this school to use 'gay' disrespectfully to mean something is bad."
- "You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word 'gay' to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful." Follow-up with, "Do you know why it is hurtful?"
- "Using the word 'homo' to tease someone is harassment and is unacceptable."
- "Even if you didn't mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this assignment gay (or queer); if you don't like something, then say you don't like it!"
- "It is never OK to say, 'you act like a girl (or look like a boy)' as a put-down."
- "Using the words 'queer,' 'dyke' or 'fag' to joke around is not OK. These are hurtful words and can impact anyone who overhears them."
- "It doesn't matter who said it, I don't want to hear that kind of language again. Is that clear?"

DON'T IGNORE IT...

- Harassment does not go away on its own.
- Ignoring mean name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.
- If other students do not see action, they get the message there is nothing wrong with it.
- Not speaking up teaches the student targeted, as well as anyone within hearing range, that they will not be protected from harassment.
- Almost any response is better than ignoring the situation. You may not know exactly what to say, but you must stop the harassment.
- Taking action reaffirms limits. Interrupting name-calling and harassment isn't always easy. With experience you will become more comfortable in handling it. Practice with colleagues.
- You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.

"A safe and welcoming school environment is essential for student success. Educators are a critical component in creating an environment that enables all students to thrive!"
— LILY ESKELSEN GARCIA
President, National Education Association

* LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer

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Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs on Gender

What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay' & Other Anti-LGBTQ+ Comments?