

# THE DUTY TO ADDRESS PERSONAL BIAS

BY RHONDA WILLIAMS

*Scenario: My school counseling colleague and I were recently having lunch together when she began to tell me about a 15-year-old student she was working with who identified as gay. She described how strongly her religious beliefs went against everything this boy was talking about. She said that based on her religious beliefs, she felt compelled to counsel the boy "out of being gay." She shared that normally she keeps her religious beliefs out of the school counseling office, but in this case, she sees her efforts worth saving this boy. To me this seems unethical. How should I approach this?*

**F**irst and foremost, our mission as school counselors is to advocate for all students, not just those with whom our personal values agree. Our professional mission based on the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors clearly identifies advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and consultations as a means to provide equity in access and educational success. Given that 64 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth report feeling unsafe at school on any given day, how might they feel when the school counselor confirms that lack of safety and support?

Research states that four out of five LGBTQ students report they can't name one supportive adult in their school. These students suffer from lower self-esteem, struggle with academics, and often exhibit depression. They are more likely to run away from home and have a higher rate of substance abuse than the general population of students. The *Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)* reports that students hear anti-gay epithets 25 times a day,



and 97 percent of the time teachers do or say nothing about this type of harassment. This marginalized group of students, who represent 5-10 percent of any given student body, is two to three times more likely to attempt suicide. Almost 30 percent of completed suicides among youth are related to sexual identity.

The first tenant of the ASCA Ethical Standards preamble states, "Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including: ethnic/racial identity, age, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity, and appearance."

The Ethical Standards are clear regarding the school counselor's role in providing equity, social justice, and self-determination. The preamble also states that students be affirmed in the groups with

which they identify, "with special care being given to students who have historically not received adequate educational services."

Other research indicates that LGBTQ students are four and a half times more likely to skip school because of safety concerns; they also have a higher dropout rate than their heterosexual counterparts.

You are in a position to support these marginalized students and help them persevere through any discrimination they might encounter. However, as in the scenario above, it's important to consider your own biases and influences. As indicated in section E.2. of the Ethical Standards, school counselors must strive for cultural competence, ensuring that they do not impose their personal beliefs on the students.

Because the ASCA Ethical Standards express the right for each person to feel safe in the school environment "free of abuse, bullying, neglect, harassment and other forms of violence," your task is to promote and provide that type of supportive environment. It is not your role to focus on a child's sexuality or orientation or impose your personal values. Rather, your duty is to take the initiative to provide a safe environment in which these students can succeed.

Litigation is another consequence of the actions of the school counselor in the scenario. According to Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, more and more schools are being held liable for the hostile climate of a school. The *Henkle vs. Gregory* case imposed monetary sanctions on schools that do not provide protection from discrimination for LGBTQ students. Discrimination of any type has been against the law since Title VII in 1964 and was reinforced by Title IX in 1972. Through the increasing number of



court cases over the past couple of decades, the judicial system holds that discrimination, be it racial, religious, or sexual, is against the law. Schools, and professionals in the schools, will be held accountable if they don't uphold a student's right to an education without discrimination.

Even if the school counselor involved in this scenario is well-trained in the hotly contested conversion therapy, this would still be outside the role of a school counselor and unethical to perform in a school setting. The school counselor who wrote this concern, although uncomfortable with her peer's reaction to the gay student, must also consider her ethical ob-

ligations. Should you find yourself in this situation, one of your obligations is to express your concern to your peer about the unethical approach to counseling this student "out of being gay."

There are other obligations to consider. School counselors are in a position to provide prevention and intervention education and support. Researchers have found that teacher and school counselor interventions, both individual and school wide, create change in the school climate. Intentionally teaching inclusive language to staff and students is one way to intervene. And schools with a strong non-discrimination policy have fewer incidents of homophobic remarks.

The scenario demonstrates many ethical concerns considering all the implications to the individual student and to the school climate is important. The school counselor's position is about developing and enhancing positive relationships. Judging and proselytizing one's own beliefs has no place ethically in the role of the school counselor.

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## LGBT-Inclusive School Checklist

### POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- ☐ Fairly enforced non-discrimination and anti-bullying/harassment policies that explicitly protect LGBT students
- ☐ School forms and applications that are inclusive of all identities and family structures
- ☐ A gender-neutral dress code, including for yearbook photos
- ☐ Gender-neutral and/or private bathrooms and changing areas

### SCHOOL EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

- ☐ School dances and proms that are safe for and inclusive of LGBT students
- ☐ Proms, homecoming and athletic events that allow for gender-neutral alternatives to "King" and "Queen"
- ☐ Valentine's Day celebrations inclusive of LGBT and non-coupled students
- ☐ Observations of Mother's Day and Father's Day that affirm all family structures

### COURSE CONTENT

- ☐ Health and sexuality education that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- ☐ Curriculum that regularly includes information about LGBT people, history and events
- ☐ Library resources and displays that are inclusive of LGBT people, history and issues

### CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Athletic teams and events that are safe for and inclusive of LGBT students
- ☐ GSA's and other student clubs that combat name-calling, bullying and harassment
- ☐ School publications that cover LGBT people and issues

Once you have assessed your school's policies and practices, you should decide which areas of your school need the most work. Collaborate with other educators and administrators to implement realistic changes within the school.



**Resources for Educators, Parents/Guardians, and Youth--Updated: 4/26/16**

**GLSEN Resources**

www.glsen.org - All of GLSEN's research, lesson plans, Safe Space Kit, and Ready, Set, Respect kit can be downloaded free of charge

www.glsen.org/policy - Sample model laws and policy downloads including: *Why Not Supporting Safe Schools Can be Expensive*: Report outlining cases against school districts with regard to keeping students safe because of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression

GLSEN Northeast Ohio Chapter - www.glsen.org/northeastoh - P.O. Box 93513, Cleveland, Ohio, 44101. Email: Northeastoh@chapters.glsen.org. To download the *Ohio Educator's Guide to GLBTQ Resources: A Guide for Creating Safe Schools for ALL Youth*. Also on Facebook.

Gary DiBianca and Jeff Bixby, Co-Chairpersons, GLSEN Northeast Ohio Chapter. Contact information above. Karen Izzi Gallagher, M.Ed., GLSEN Certified Trainer, and Stonewall Columbus Speaker's Bureau Presenter. Email: [izzi1957@gmail.com](mailto:izzi1957@gmail.com)

GLSEN Greater Dayton - P.O. Box 951, Miamisburg, Ohio, 45343. Email: Dayton@chapters.glsen.org. Also on Facebook.

GLSEN Greater Cincinnati - P.O. Box 19856, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45219. Phone: 866-934-9119. Email: [info@glseincincinnati.org](mailto:info@glseincincinnati.org). Also on Facebook.

**Statewide Resources**

**Stonewall Columbus**

www.stonewallcolumbus.org - 1160 N. High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43201. Phone: 614-299-7764. Liam Gallagher, Transgender Outreach Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator – [lgallagher@stonewallcolumbus.org](mailto:lgallagher@stonewallcolumbus.org). Also on Facebook.

**PFLAG Columbus Chapter** – www.columbuspflag.org; 614-313-9956

**Two locations:**

North Columbus: Meetings: 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, 2-4pm

First Unitarian Universalist Church  
93 West Weisheimer Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

Downtown Columbus: Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays, 2-4pm

St. Johns United Church of Christ  
59 East Mound Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**PFLAG Cleveland Chapter** – www.pflagcleveland.org; (216)556-1701; [mail@pflagcleveland.org](mailto:mail@pflagcleveland.org)

Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, 6:45pm  
Trinity Cathedral  
Euclid Avenue and East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Cleveland, Ohio

**PFLAG Akron Chapter** – www.pflagakron.org; Info/helpline: (330)342-5825; [pflagakron@aol.com](mailto:pflagakron@aol.com)

Meetings: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of each month, 7:00pm  
North Springfield Presbyterian Church  
671 N.Canton Rd.  
Akron, Ohio



### **PFLAG Dayton Chapter**

[www.pflagdayton.org](http://www.pflagdayton.org), P.O. Box 3721, Dayton, Ohio 45401-3721

Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. 7:00pm-Social time, 7:30pm-Program/Support  
Harmony Creek Church, 5280 Bigger Road, Kettering, Ohio 45440

### **PFLAG Greater Cincinnati Chapter**

[www.pflagcinci.org](http://www.pflagcinci.org) P.O. Box 19634, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45219-0634, (513)721-7900 and ask for the PFLAG contact number. Email: [info@pflagcinci.org](mailto:info@pflagcinci.org)

Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. 7:00pm-Social time, 7:30pm-Program/Support  
Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church, 103 William Howard Taft Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

### **OutSupport, Medina Ohio**

[www.outsupport.org](http://www.outsupport.org) - 330-241-1281. Meetings: 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of every month, 7:00pm  
Unity of Medina, Williams on the Lake, 4<sup>th</sup> building 787 Lafayette Rd., Medina, Ohio 44256

### **National Resources**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** – [www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm)

**The TREVOR Project** - [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org) - 24/7 hotline: 1-866-488-7386

**The Trans Lifeline** – [www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org) - 24/7 hotline: 1-877-565-8860

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline** – [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) -24/7 hotline: 1-800-273-8255

**It Gets Better Project** - [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org). To communicate to LGBTQ youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them

**To Write Love On Her Arms** – [www.twloha.com](http://www.twloha.com). Presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide.

**Teaching Tolerance** – [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org). Teaching Tolerance is a site devoted to the development of educational resources

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** – LGBT Youth and Schools Resources and Links:  
[https://www.aclu.org/library-lgbt-youth-schools-resources-and-links?redirect=lgbt-rights\\_hiv-aids/library#access](https://www.aclu.org/library-lgbt-youth-schools-resources-and-links?redirect=lgbt-rights_hiv-aids/library#access)

**Schools in Transition** –2015 guide provided by the NEA. Excellent guide.  
<https://www.genderspectrum.org/staging/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Schools-in-Transition-2015.pdf>

**GenderSpectrum** website: <https://www.genderspectrum.org/resources/>

**Lambda Legal** – [www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/youth](http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/youth)

### **Additional Resources**

- BRAVO (Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization): [www.bravo-ohio.org](http://www.bravo-ohio.org)
- COLAGE: [www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)
- Equality Ohio: [www.equalityohio.org](http://www.equalityohio.org)
- Kaleidoscope Youth Center: [www.kycoho.org](http://www.kycoho.org)
- TransOhio: [www.transohio.org](http://www.transohio.org)
- Human Rights Campaign (HRC): [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
- National Gay & Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF): [www.theTaskForce.org](http://www.theTaskForce.org)



# Resources on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History

## Books for Adults

- Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America* by Molly McGarry and Fred Wasserman
- Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School and College Students* by Kevin Jennings
- Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* by Allan Bérubé
- Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays and the Struggle for Equality* by Eric Brandt
- Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* by Jonathan Ned Katz
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Events, 1848–2006* by Lillian Faderman
- Hidden From History* by Martin Duberman
- Homophobia: A History* by Byrne Fone
- Improper Bostonians: Lesbian and Gay History from the Puritans to Playland* compiled by The History Project
- Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History and Literature* by Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe
- Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* by Eric Marcus
- Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights* by Eric Marcus
- My Desire for History: Essays in Gay, Community, and Labor History* by Allan Bérubé
- Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* by Lillian Faderman
- One More River to Cross: Black and Gay in America* by Keith Boykin
- Out in All Directions: A Treasury of Gay and Lesbian America* by Eric Marcus
- Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* by Neil Miller
- A Queer History of the United States* by Michael Bronski
- Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai
- Stonewall* by Martin Duberman
- To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done For America – A History* by Lillian Faderman
- Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* by Leslie Feinberg
- Two Spirit People: American Indian Lesbian Women and Gay Men* by Lester B. Brown
- Who's Who In Gay And Lesbian History* by Robert Aldrich
- Who's Who in Contemporary Gay and Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day* by Robert Aldrich
- World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* by John D'Emilio

## Books for Youth

- Gay America: Struggle for Equality* by Linas Alsenas
- Gay Power!: The Stonewall Riots and the Gay Rights Movement, 1969* by Betsy Kuhn
- Gay Rights Activists* by Kate Burns
- Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present* by Nancy Garden
- Issues in Gay and Lesbian Life* (A series for teens by Chelsea House Publishers, which includes the following titles: *Lesbians and Gays and Sports* by Perry Deane Young and *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Homosexuality* by Ellen Herman)



*Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians* ( A series for teens by Chelsea House Publishers, which includes the following titles:  
James Baldwin, Willa Cather, Marlene Dietrich, Rock Hudson, John Maynard Keynes, T. E. Lawrence, Liberace, Federico Garcia Lorca, Martina Navratilova, Sappho, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde

*Statistical Timeline and Overview of Gay Life* (Gallup's Guide to Modern Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Lifestyle) by Zachary Chastain

## DVDs

*After Stonewall* by John Scagliotti, Janet Baus, Dan Hunt; First Run Features

*Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* by Greta Schiller; First Run Features

*The Brandon Teena Story* by Gréta Olafsdóttir and Susan Muska; New Video Group

*Brother Outsider* by Bennett Singer and Nancy D. Kates; Question Why Films

*The Celluloid Closet* by Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman; Sony Pictures

*Coming Out Under Fire* by Arthur Dong; DeepFocus Productions

*Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* by Robert Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman; New Yorker Video

*Gay Pioneers* by Glenn Holsten; Glennfilms / Equality Forum

*Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100* by Yvonne Welbon; Sisters in Cinema

*Milk* by Gus Van Sant; Universal Studios

*Out of the Past* by Jeff Dupre; Unapix Films

*Paragraph 175* by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, J.; New Yorker Video

*The Times of Harvey Milk* by Rob Epstein and Richard Schmiechen; Black Sand Productions, Inc.

## Websites

Black History Month Profiles: Highlighting Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender People: [www.nbjc.org/news/black-history-month-profiles.html](http://www.nbjc.org/news/black-history-month-profiles.html)

Gay History and Literature: <http://rictornorton.co.uk>

Gay & Lesbian History in the US: A Snapshot of the 20th Century: [http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/cmathison/gay\\_les](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/cmathison/gay_les)

Gay and Lesbian Studies: A Research Guide (New York Public Library):  
<http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/chss/grd/resguides/gay/gay.cfm>

GLBT Historical Society: [www.glbthistory.org](http://www.glbthistory.org)

GLBT History Month: [www.glbthistorymonth.com/glbthistorymonth/2010](http://www.glbthistorymonth.com/glbthistorymonth/2010)

GLBTQ Encyclopedia: [www.glbtq.com](http://www.glbtq.com)

The Lesbian Herstory Archives: [www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org](http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org)

LGBT History on the Web: <http://home.earthlink.net/~ruthpett/lgbthistorynw/links.htm>

ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives: [www.onearchives.org](http://www.onearchives.org)

OutHistory: [www.outhistory.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Out of the Past: [www.pbs.org/outofthepast](http://www.pbs.org/outofthepast)

People With a History: [www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh)

Reclaiming History: [www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/reclaiming\\_history.html](http://www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/reclaiming_history.html)

Stonewall and Beyond: Lesbian and Gay Culture: [www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/exhibitions/sw25](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/exhibitions/sw25)



## Non-fiction books for LGBTQ teens and young adults:

- *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* edited by Marion Dane Bauer
- *Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Youth And Their Allies* by Ellen Bass (designed to make everyone feel empowered about his or her or another's sexuality and achieve understanding and tolerance.
- *GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for Queer and Questioning Teens* by Kelly Huegel
- *The Little Black Book for Guys: Guys Talk About Sex* by St. Stephens Community House
- *The Little Black Book for Girlz: A Book on Healthy Sexuality* by St. Stephens Community House
- *Gender Identity: The Ultimate Teen Guide* by Scarecrow Press
- *Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities* by David Levithan (Edt)

## LGBTQ fiction for teens and young adults:

- *21 Proms* by David Levithan
- *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden\*
- *Are We There Yet?* by David Levithan
- *Beyond the Wind* by Rob N. Hood
- *Boy Meets Boy* by David Levithan\*
- *Deliver Us from Evie* by M. E. Kerr
- *Down to the Bone* by Mayra Lazara Dole
- *Empress of the World* by Sara Ryan\*
- *Far from Xanadu* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Freak Show* by James St. James
- *Geography Club* by Brent Hartinger
- *Getting It* by Alex Sanchez/ Michael Frost
- *Girl from Mars* by Tamara Bach / Shelley Tanaka
- *God Box* by Alex Sanchez
- *Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger\*\*
- *Hero* by Perry Moore
- *Is He or Isn't He?* by John Hall/John Scognamiglio
- *Keeping You a Secret* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Last Chance Texaco* by Brent Hartinger
- *Luna* by Julie Anne Peters\*
- *The Misfits* by James Howe\*\*
- *My Heartbeat* by Garret Freymann-Weyr\*\*
- *My Tiki Girl* by Jennifer McMahon
- *Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger
- *Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky\*\*
- *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez\*
- *Rainbow High* by Alex Sanchez
- *Rainbow Road* by Alex Sanchez



- *Realm of Possibility* by David Levithan
- *Rules for Hearts* by Sara Ryan
- *So Hard to Say* by Alex Sanchez
- *Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You* by Peter Cameron
- *Straight Road to Kylie* by Nico Medina
- *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* by Shyam Selvadurai
- *This Is Push: An Anthology of New Writing* by David Levithan (Edt)
- *Totally Joe* by James Howe
- *The Vast Fields of Ordinary* by Nick Burd
- *Where We Are, What We See* by David Levithan (Edt)
- *Wide Awake* by David Levithan
- *The Year They Burned the Books* by Nancy Garden

### **Children's Books about LGBTQ Families:**

- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
- *Uncle What-Is-It is Coming to Visit* by Michael Willhoite
- *Love Makes a Family* by Peggy Gillespie
- *Daddy, Papa, and Me* by Leslea' Newman
- *Mommy, Mama, and Me* by Leslea' Newman & Carol Thompson
- *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* by Sarah Brannen
- *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio* by Rigoberto Gonzalez
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman & Carol Thompson

### **Children's Books Addressing Gender Stereotypes:**

- *Be Who You Are!* by Jennifer Carr
- *I am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *Red, A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall
- *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert
- *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow
- *Free To Be Me* by Marlo Thomas and Friends
- *Oliver Button Is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola
- *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodaris
- *The Sissy Duckling* by Harvey Fierstein

### **Non-Fiction LGBTQ Books:**

- *Gay America: Struggle for Equality* by Linas Alsenas (detailed work covers more than a hundred years of LGBTQ history)
- *Gay and Lesbian History for Kids: The Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights* by Jerome Pohlen
- *Sally Ride: A Photobiography of America's Pioneering Woman in Space* by Tam O'Shaughnessy
- *Is it a Choice? Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People* by Eric Marcus
- *Something To Tell You: The Road Families Travel When a Child is Gay* by Gilbert Herdt



- *What if Someone I Know is Gay: Answers to Questions About What It Means to be Gay and Lesbian* by Eric Marcus
- *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society* by Bruce Bawer
- *A Journey to Moriah (a remarkable story of the mother of a gay son and her journey of loving him)* by Gary Pool
- *Coming Out As Parents: You and Your Homosexual Child* by David K Switzer
- *50 Ways to Support Lesbian and Gay Equality: The Complete Guide to Supporting Family, Friends, Neighbors-Or Yourself.* By Merdith Maran
- *Loving Someone Gay* by Don Clark
- *Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians & Gays Talk About Their Experiences* by Carolyn Griffin, Marian Wirth
- *Straight Parents, Gay Children: Keeping Families Together* by Bob Bernstein
- *The Other Side of the Closet: The Coming-Out Crisis For Straight Spouses* by Amity Buxton
- *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* by Loraine Hutchins (editor) and Lani Kaahumanu

### **Books on the topic of Sexuality and Religion:**

- *Children are Free: Re-examining the Biblical Evidence on Same-sex Relationships* by Jeff Miner (excellent for answering questions about the Bible...highly recommended)
- *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* by Walter Wink
- *Anything but Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth* by Wayne Besen
- *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor: A Positive Christian Response* by Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott
- *What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage* by David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni
- *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* by Jack Rogers
- *The New Testament and Homosexuality* by Robin Scroggs
- *A Time to Embrace: Same-Gender Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics* by William Stacy Johnson
- *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak
- *Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians & Gays in Black Churches* by Horace L. Griffin
- *A Whosoever Church: Welcoming Lesbians and Gay Men into African American Congregations* by Gary David Comstock
- *Talking about Homosexuality, a Congregational Resource* by Karen P. Oliveto
- *Exile or Embrace? Congregations Discerning Their Response to Lesbian and Gay Christians* by Mahan Siler
- *Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America* by Mel White



- *Here I Stand: My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love & Equality* by John Shelby Spong

**\*\*Ask me for a list of books for transgender youth\*\***

**Updated: 2/19/16**



# CULTIVATE RESPECT

BY MEKINA MORGAN

**A**re elementary school students too young to worry about addressing issues surrounding gay and lesbian students? No, experts say. It's never too early to begin teaching children about respecting differences. When an elementary school student has questions related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) issues, school counselors must be prepared to answer these questions in a way that fosters healthy dialogue, critical thinking, and inclusiveness. With that in mind, your conversations should include all students and perspectives to create a safe and supportive school climate. Several strategies will help you and your school community have positive conversations with elementary school students around LGBTQ issues.

## PLANT THE SEEDS

Prepare yourself for the important conversations around LGBTQ issues within your elementary school community. Before your first conversation, do the following to establish a foundation for future conversations.

**Do your homework:** You play the leading role in fostering safe and affirming conversations about LGBTQ perspectives with elementary school students. It is crucial that your dialogue with students be based on facts, not stereotypes, misconceptions, or a limited knowledge of relevant issues. By expanding your own knowledge on LGBTQ perspectives, you will empower yourself to creatively engage in meaningful conversations with your students.

**Find support:** After you've done your homework, find local support. With more than 200,000 members and affiliates, PFLAG National provides grassroots-based assistance and outreach to communities



all over the country. Developing a partnership with your local PFLAG chapter is a great first step to provide your school with current and accurate information geared toward students, families, teachers, and school counselors.

**Know your community:** Don't assume that your school community doesn't have LGBTQ families or students. Making this false assumption will limit positive dialogue and behaviors and could isolate members of your school community. Remember that creating a supportive space for everyone to be valued in your school community is vital to healthy growth and development for young students. Your main goal is to support and nurture your students, and the first step toward that goal is to know and understand everyone in your community.

**Consider your students:** Before starting a conversation about LGBTQ matters with your students, you must be in touch with their cognitive development to help

frame the dialogue. Since many young students are grappling with their understanding of the world around them as it relates to their personal growth and experiences, they may start asking more questions and challenging your reasoning. Students will start to see connections between how they use language and how language affects behavior. For example, elementary students will become aware of the school's negative view of the word "gay" if they are reprimanded for using the word when asking questions. As a result, students often internalize what they see and hear and will make connections with how it makes them feel and behave.

## WATCH THEM TAKE ROOT

In developing a welcoming school environment, the next step toward meaningful conversations around LGBTQ perspectives with elementary school students is to become active within your school community, providing support and elevat-



ing your role and presence as a resource.

**Don't assume your students are too young:** Elementary school is an appropriate time to begin discussing LGBTQ issues. In fact, elementary school is the best time to lay the foundation of respect for all people and acknowledge the school's acceptance of all families and students. Remember to be mindful of the ages and maturity levels of your students, but the message of respect for all should be consistent and maintained.

**Be an accessible ally:** You want to encourage your students to come to you by making your space welcoming. Consider having LGBTQ-positive posters, Safe Zone stickers, books, and other welcoming materials that symbolize your ally status. Your school community needs to know that you are an LGBTQ ally, especially when trying to develop a spirit of inclusion for all school community members.

**Listen carefully:** It's important to understand thoroughly what your students are asking so you can formulate a solid response to their questions. You may want to ask them why they are asking the question, what do they already know about being LGBTQ, where have they heard the language, how do they feel about the word "gay," etc. You want to create an atmosphere where discussing LGBTQ issues is encouraged and part of the culture of your school. Also remember that if one student has questions, other students also may have questions or will in the future. Taking careful notes may help you formulate a lesson, activity, or school event to educate everyone. Never judge or promote fear; your students are looking to you for guidance and support.

**Connect to real life:** Always use concrete examples instead of

abstract concepts, and always do your best to relate the example to something that could happen in the students' immediate future. It is crucial for students to see how their voices, experiences, questions, and behaviors fit into their current lives. For example, if a student used respectful words to manage a difficult situation, praise and ask the student to think of another situation in which those words could help. If students are using the word "gay" to hurt or tease another student, ask them to think of a time when someone used a word that hurt their feelings. Also, remind them that although being gay is nothing to be ashamed of, any word used in a combative or derogatory way can result in hurt feelings.

**Do something:** Intervene immediately when you experience students engaging in bullying behavior. Allowing negative behaviors or language to go unnoticed or unaddressed opens the door to an unsafe learning environment. Intervening is the first step toward changing the school climate.

**Use established character education programs:** Many elementary schools are required to have character education programs aimed at building students' social development. Adapt your current program to support discussions around LGBTQ issues. Using familiar language, tools, and will make the dialogue easier and more accessible to students and teachers.

**Share positive perspectives:** Provide your school community with opportunities to see positive LGBTQ perspectives by providing educational resources such as books, videos, and other publications that address LGBTQ issues.

### WATCH THEM GROW

To work with students and their families effectively, you must work

with the administration and teachers in your school to create a safe and inclusive environment for even the youngest children. Educate yourself about the issues, learn the appropriate terms to use in conversation around those issues, and put into place comprehensive strategies to begin and sustain a meaningful dialogue with your students and the broader school community.

One way to sustain a welcoming school climate is to participate in national school events promoting inclusive climates, such as Mix It Up Day, which encourages schools to intentionally work toward dismantling stereotypes and creating inclusive environments for all students. Always make sure your resources are current and are available to the school community. PFLAG National offers many publications, some in Spanish, that can be used to support parents, families, and caregivers. Family support is vital in having positive LGBTQ-related discussions at home.

Remember that a respect-for-all approach is the best way to talk about LGBTQ issues with elementary school-age children. When students' physical and emotional needs are properly addressed, when they are given guidance to build positive interactions, and when they are able to bring their true selves and identities to school, they are likely to demonstrate supportive behavior toward their peers, all of which leads to academic and social success. ■

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