

Did you know?

- Millions of children with one or more LGBT parents are in schools across the country.
- Children with LGBT parents face heightened levels of bullying, name-calling and harassment.
- When there is a positive relationship between families and schools, students perform better academically and socially.
- LGBT parents tend to be highly involved in their children's education.

Parents can engage with their children's schools in a variety of ways to help ensure a safe, supportive learning environment for their children. The list below offers some specific suggestions. Do those which feel most comfortable to you.

Specific things you as parents can do to make your schools safe and welcoming spaces:

1. Ask Questions:

Ask the principal and your child's teacher if they are aware of other LGBT families at the school currently or in the past. Ask how school staff deal with comments like "that's so gay" or other anti-LGBT slurs. Ask whether the staff has received training on how to support students with LGBT families. Ask the school librarian if the library contains books that include LGBT families. Find out who is on the school board, PTA and other influential groups at school and research their records regarding inclusiveness.

2. Be Out:

Be as out as you feel you safely can be in your community. Meet with your principal and teacher to introduce your family. Introduce yourselves to other families at school. Let your child's teacher know what language you use to describe your family relationships (e.g. Daddy/Papa, Eva has two moms). Be a guest speaker in your child's class, at a staff meeting or PTA meeting.

3. Get Involved:

Parents can have a huge influence in their school communities when they get involved. Volunteer in your child's classroom or help out in the school. Take on a leadership role—join the PTA, site council, diversity committee, or curriculum review committee. Make your voice heard—express your thanks when the school or district takes steps to be LGBT inclusive and vocally oppose any anti-LGBT policies or actions. Speak up at a school board meeting or email board members and district administrators about issues that impact your family.

4. Check Policies:

Take a look at your school or district's policies addressing discrimination, harassment and bullying to see if they include sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. If they don't, work with administrators, teachers and other parents to change them.

5. Fix Forms:

If your school forms say “mother/father” rather than “parent/guardian,” ask if they could be updated to include all families.

6. Provide Resources:

Suggest specific, concrete ways the school could change to be more supportive of your family. Offer suggestions for age-appropriate books, videos, curriculum and other materials that include LGBT families. Donate some of these resources if you can. Offer suggestions for how to deal with potentially sticky situations like Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, family-tree assignments, or how to respond when other parents have questions about your family. Let your principal and teacher know about LGBT-related staff development opportunities, such as local trainers or conferences.

7. Build Community:

Organize a get-together with the parents/guardians of other children in your child’s classroom. If there are other LGBT families at your school, organize an LGBT and Ally potluck at school. Start an LGBT school advocacy group in your district or region. There is great strength in numbers and in diverse voices advocating for fairness.

8. Expect More!

Whether your school is just beginning the process of becoming a welcoming environment for LGBT families or has already taken great strides to do so, continue to raise your expectations. Nearly every school could take further steps to become even more welcoming and inclusive of LGBT families. Help your school move to the next level.

“The more involved and visible you are, the more the school, children and parents will see that we are loving and caring parents, just like everyone else!

Lauren, LGBT Parent

www.familyequality.org

Family Equality Council Resources

made with YOUR family in mind

Opening Doors

Our question-and-answer guide for LGBT parents, educators and children interested in making schools safe and inclusive for all loving families.

www.familyequality.org/resources/publications

Rainbow Report Card

Our online, interactive tool that generates custom recommendations for your situation in schools.

www.familyequality.org/reportcard

Policy Reports and Maps

We maintain a series of policy reports and maps that lay out the legal situation for LGBT families and the issues that matter most to them.

www.familyequality.org/resources/publications

LGBT Family Children's Book List

A reading list of age-appropriate books featuring LGBT family themes.

www.familyequality.org/resources/publications