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## Including everyone a handbook for LGBT inclusion in the elementary classroom

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# INCLUDING EVERYONE: A HANDBOOK FOR LGBT INCLUSION IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

by

SHANINE MOLLENTZE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Education  
in the College of Education  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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## ABSTRACT

A quick look into the prevalence of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) topics in children's literature and one can easily note the rarity of LGBT presence in elementary classrooms. This topic continually fails to enter the classroom curriculum due to the taboo status it has in society. Some people find it to be inappropriate for the classroom, especially the elementary classroom. However, understanding that the intention is to provide an inclusive environment for LGBT students and/or families is important—not to expose children to explicit sexual discussion, but to establish a community of tolerance and acceptance.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore, collect, and synthesize the literature regarding LGBT studies in order to create a handbook for preservice teachers, teachers who are in the university program to become teachers. The handbook will provide inclusion strategies, materials to educate preservice teachers on the topic and how to include it in the classroom (via children's literature or units of study), strategies to broach the topic with parents and administrators, classroom environment ideas, and a complete resource list of books and websites with suggestions on where to use them in instruction. Choosing to share quality literature will be important; however the focus of this thesis will center upon better preparing preservice teachers. For purposes of this study, preservice teachers are defined as students in elementary educator preparation courses at UCF. This target audience is required to take children's literature classes in this preparatory program. Preservice literature classes discuss the relevance and importance of including various genres and types of literature in the classroom

## DEDICATIONS

For all my friends who live their daily lives in bold defiance of societal restrictions.

For my loving family, who continually support me in my every endeavor.

And for the prospect of a future generation, unbound by invisible ties, free to live and love the way that best suits them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Rationale**

A quick look into the prevalence of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender topics in children's literature and one can easily note the rarity of LGBT presence in elementary classrooms. This topic continually fails to enter the classroom curriculum due to the taboo status it has in society. Some people find it to be inappropriate for the classroom, especially the elementary classroom. However, understanding that the intention is to provide an inclusive environment for LGBT students and/or families is important—not to expose children to explicit sexual discussion, but to establish a community of tolerance and acceptance.

The importance of including these topics in the classroom is clear. Gay teen suicide is common and can be seen in many recent news broadcastings. Desperate, public pleas from parents to end the bullying illuminate the devastating effects of ignoring LGBT issues in our society. So bad has this issue been that not even President Obama has eluded the discussion of rampant bullying in America's schools. He has spoken publicly about how we need to actively speak out against bullying.

Anti-LGBT bullying unfortunately leads to drastic outcomes. For instance, in September of 2010, concerned teachers and allies of LGBT students from Anoka-Hennepin school district in Minnesota spoke out about the loss of seven students. These students, within the span of a year, decided to end their pain from LGBT bullying through suicide. In the aftermath, suicide prevention specialists were called in to train teachers, administrators and students how to effectively deal with the string of suicides. Teachers partook in 45 minute sessions teaching them

how to “respond to suicide.” Certain district staff partook in more intensive three-hour training sessions focusing on specific resources they could utilize in reaction to suicide. Presentations given to students included various strategies to help peers with feelings of suicide, reduce the stigma of suicide, as well as different inherited mental illnesses linked to suicide. These prevention specialists discussed the issue of anti-LGBT bullying despite not being given explicit directions from the district to do so. The confusion arose somewhere in the district’s “neutrality” stance on LGBT lifestyle. The cause of these suicides was anti-LGBT bullying; however, teachers were not able to explicitly discuss these issues in the classroom. Teachers did not know how to respond to these issues as they became relevant in the classroom. This uncertainty and avoidance is all it takes to send the wrong message to LGBT students and families. The message teachers receive from administration is simply to disregard discussion and hopefully to avoid the issue altogether. Seven suicides occurred under the neutrality policy. It isn’t working. A turn for the positive happened for LGBT students on January 11, 2011 however. The Minneapolis Board of Education “...passed a resolution instructing district administrators to develop a district-wide system for tracking incidents of anti-LGBT harassment.” The resolution is a landmark in the history of Education because it is one of the first times LGBT rights have been acknowledged in any legitimate manner.

Sexual orientation bullying does not begin (or end) in high school. Every child whether in Kindergarten or 12<sup>th</sup> grade is exposed to homophobic bullying as a 2005 National School Climate Survey showed. These types of gender classifications begin from birth—pink blanket or blue blanket? From there, consciously or not, we continue to raise children on the basis of gender. Toys, clothes, even behaviors are attributed to assigned gender roles. Because of these

strict gender policies children begin to formulate ideas about the world we live in. As responsible adults and educators we need to examine our personal biases, understand where those biases interfere with inclusion and safe environments in our classrooms. In order to create a safe environment for all students, educators need to assess their stance on a multitude of topics, then, decide how to effectively respond to those issues as they come up in the class. By being preemptively prepared, educators can avoid much of the controversy and anguish that come from being unprepared for serious issues, such as LGBT issues.

Though individuals who are directly affected by anti-LGBT prejudice must suffer through injustice and even sometimes die for it, the advent of social media has provided new spaces for students, teachers, and allies of LGBT students and families to speak out against the injustice they must face. Social media seeps deeper into our lives daily, into every crevice of our modern existence. No longer can people ignore the issues. In fact, in December 2010, the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy was repealed by the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Don't Ask Don't Tell forced people in the military to silence their personal sexual preferences. In fact, if it surfaced that they were gay or lesbian, they would be discharged from the armed services. The overturn of such a clearly prejudiced law gives me hope for the future—our students. We as teachers need to be a positive change for those students who suffer needlessly by speaking out against bullying. We as teachers need to model inclusionary practices in our classrooms—microcosms of society at large. To remain silent on the issue is to concede to bullying and perpetuates the marginalization of LGBT people in society.

The studies I have included in this thesis all highlight the necessity of inclusion of LGBT issues in the elementary classroom through the use of children's literature. Furthermore, these studies also highlight the importance of providing better discussions and resources for preservice teachers on LGBT topics. Preservice teachers need not change their personal views on LGBT students/families/colleagues, but they do need to create space for the reality that they will be among these people throughout their classroom career. Instead of remaining silent on the issue and allowing kids to sort it out amongst themselves (which is more often than not disastrous), teachers need to provide a safe environment where students can be guided through these sensitive topics by a caring adult in their life.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore, collect, and synthesize the literature regarding LGBT studies in order to create a handbook for preservice teachers, teachers who are in the university program to become teachers. The handbook will provide complete resource list of books and their award ratings, online resources, themed instruction ideas, inclusion strategies, classroom environment ideas, strategies to broach LGBT topics with concerned parents and administrators, and FAQ's of concerned teachers/parents. Choosing to share quality literature will be important; however the focus of this thesis will center upon better preparing preservice teachers. For purposes of this study, preservice teachers are defined as students in elementary educator preparation courses at UCF. This target audience is required to take children's literature classes in this preparatory program. Preservice literature classes discuss the relevance and importance of including various genres and types of literature in the classroom.

To further legitimize the need for LGBT topics in the classroom, Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) were consulted. (See Appendix A) Tying NGSSS standards to LGBT inclusion may help ease the tension of its taboo status.

In the next chapter, Review of the Literature, I will discuss the various sources of research that helped guide and formulate my thesis work. Sources came from online databases, various organizational websites, and books. The selection process for including the sources in my work was limited to specific criteria. These sources needed to provide critical analysis of LGBT issues in the elementary schools as well as critical analysis of LGBT literature for the elementary classroom. Still, some other sources included strategies of including LGBT students and families into the classroom in a safe manner.

All of these resources provided valuable insight and helped me to formulate a handbook to aid preservice teachers in their own classrooms. Many of the resources identified a gap or precipice where their own research left them. Suggestions for further research came from these articles, and I feel that is where I picked up. In chapter two, I've also included my reactions to the literature to help illuminate my thinking process.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

The literature review for this study delved into many different realms of LGBT issues in schools. Topics ranged from researchers' compilations and syntheses of scholarly articles on how patriarchal values often times permeate into the classroom and therefore reproduce certain detrimental attitudes; resources and educational points of interest for teachers, students, and families on how to employ inclusive strategies; and many ideas on how to legitimize the discussion of LGBT topics in the classroom.

### **A) Primary Points of Focus from the Literature:**

Because of the taboo subject, elementary classroom teachers may ignore LGBT literature. The problem of not including LGBT literature into the classroom manifests into larger issues in the school environment and society at large. As I began my study, I wanted to review what other researchers had contributed to this field. Researchers Duke and McCarthy (2009) reviewed 31 articles exploring issues related to sexuality of young children attending Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in the United States as well as articles that critique homophobia, heterosexism, and/or sexism in the ECE context. They classified all the articles according to publication type, research design and emergent theme. Duke and McCarthy (2009) synthesized the material and identified articles discussing, "...ways in which ECE programs and elementary schools reinforce and reproduce sexism and the oppression of women." (Duke & McCarthy, 2009) An overarching trend emerged from these 31 articles—the elementary school perpetuated patriarchal, sexist, and homophobic beliefs. Duke and McCarthy included third-wave feminism and queer theory as a vehicle further substantiating the necessity of including more resources and

education on the topic of LGBT students, families and even teachers in the elementary classroom. Not only did Duke and McCarthy include strategies implementing inclusive instruction they also included a section discussing the importance of providing preservice teachers with exposure to LGBT issues, literature, and strategies that successfully include often marginalized students.

Another researcher and professor of children's literature, Hermann-Wilmarth (2010) writes about her research into exposing LGBT literature to her preservice teachers. This article really inspired me to include preservice teachers my study. She utilized LGBT children's literature as a shoe-in to discussing the importance of addressing LGBT issues in the classroom. Small-group discussions were integral to the process of unfolding a dialogue between preservice teachers in Hermann-Wilmarth's Elementary Literature class. Hermann-Wilmarth chose to follow Singh's (2002) definition of dialogue as "...a relation we enter into, get caught up in, get carried away by, or are changed by." (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010, 189) The driving purpose behind such dialogue, again highlighted through Singh's (2002) assertion, "...is not necessarily to achieve consent but to achieve social justice for everyone." (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010, 197) This is the most integral point for discussing LGBT literature in the classroom.

In another research article Hermann-Wilmarth teamed up with Souto-Manning (2008) to explore preservice teachers' reactions to LGBT literature as well as methods of integrating LGBT literature into the classroom. This research explores broader political issues surrounding inclusion of LGBT literature and inclusion in the classroom. For people who feel that sexuality is not an appropriate issue for the elementary classroom, one look at a 2005 National School

Climate Survey report shows "...the most commonly heard bigoted language in the hallways were homophobic remarks, and nine out of ten student respondents reported hearing 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' to indicate worthlessness or stupidity." (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008, 264) Souto-Manning's first grade classroom included a family with two mothers and she noticed that the student belonging to that family was not playing with other classmates on the playground. Souto-Manning used this student's issue to navigate into discussion about sexual diversity in a first-grade classroom, "...within the context of an inquiry into diverse families." (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008, 271) Students were given the opportunity to opt-out of discussion by participating in other literacy activities, while the rest of the students discussed children's literature that included topics anywhere from homeless families to adoptive families in order to introduce the idea of diversity in family units.

Souto-Manning (2008) quelled negative remarks regarding the diverse family units, explaining that none of them were bad, just different. She stressed the importance of respect. She assured parents, before introducing LGBT literature, that she was exposing students to "multicultural contemporary families." (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008, 274) Souto-Manning chose to read Skutch's (1995) book entitled *Who's in a Family?* portraying, "...diverse, multicultural contemporary family units, including single parents, lesbian and gay parents, mixed-race couples, grandparents and divorced parents." (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008, 272) After the whole group instruction she walked the class to the library and they selected give other books dealing specifically with LGBT families to become part of the Classroom library. These books included: *My Two Uncles* (Vigna, 1995), *Asha's Mums* (Elwin &



Paulse, 2000), *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newmann, 2000), and *Daddy's Roommate* (Willhoite, 1991) These books became some of the most read in the classroom library.

Swartz (2003) discusses ideas on how to bring sexual orientation into children's and young adult literature classrooms. The integration of sexual orientation into the classroom can be done effectively, and to the betterment of all students, by better preparing (or in some instances simply breaking the silence) and educating preservice teachers on the topic of LGBT issues. Swartz references work from African-American activist Barbara Smith who discusses the fact that homophobia is still rampant in schools and that any curriculum discussing positive views on sexual identity and sexism is rare. Smith offers a good segue into broaching the often touchy subject of homophobia into university preservice curriculum by discussing the interconnectedness of all oppressions.

Swartz provides an invaluable list of reference materials that teachers can utilize to integrate LGBT issues seamlessly into the preservice classroom. A noteworthy film by Debra Chasnoff entitled *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in Schools* can serve as a good starting point for effective preservice teacher instruction. The film, "...provides both insights into prejudices and homophobia and methods for examining homophobia, stereotypes and prejudice in the language arts or social studies classroom." (Swartz, 2003, 2) Swartz provides literature, websites and films as resources to provide to preservice teachers.

Another insight into LGBT inclusion in the classroom comes from Editor Howard M. Miller. Miller (1999) teaches preservice students and was inspired to provide them with resources on LGBT inclusion after reading a journal entry from one of his students who wrote

vehemently against racism yet was repulsed at homosexuality. Miller highlighted the horrors students go through in schools through Jamie Nabozny's story. Jamie was "...regularly spat on and beaten up in school, subjected to a mock rape, and kicked in the belly so many times he needed surgery." The response from the attorney for Jamie's school administrators said, "...his clients were hurt by the verdict and noted that the years of harassment that Nabozny had been subjected to is the sort of 'misbehavior the school administrators cannot control.'" (Miller, 632) Miller includes a list of reasons in his article *Teaching and Learning about Cultural Diversity: Swimming with the Sharks*, pertinent to the relevance of discussing LGBT issues in curriculum: "There are an estimated 2.9 million gay or lesbian youth in the United States alone...yet the schools offer virtually no information, support or visible role models, and silence and ignorance are allowed to prevail. Close to one in five gay or lesbian youth report suffering physical attacks based on their sexual orientation alone...many...from their gaybashing peers. Substance abuse and suicide are three times higher among gay and lesbian youth than among the general population." These are simply a few of Miller's mentioned reasons, and they paint a grim picture. These are real issues that require urgent attention. Students cannot keep receiving the message from their schools, teachers, and families that since they are LGBT they can expect bullying, in fact—that bullying of this type will be largely ignored.

Though not a direct form of literature, writing is also related to the process of effective expression, cognition and comprehension of personal and literature topics. Author Jenifer Schneider (2001) interviewed twelve teachers (middle and elementary) discussing two questions: 1) What topics do teacher consider "taboo" or "off limits" in children's writing and 2) How do teachers deal with such issues that make them feel uncomfortable, nervous, or angry? (Schneider,

415) Her questions were determined in three different ways: 1) Schneider read related literature to determine issues in children's writing that have been debated and discussed, 2) Schneider reflected on her own personal discomfort when she was a teacher and, 3) Schneider informally surveyed colleagues to determine topics they felt she should include. There is a great miscommunication in classrooms when students are asked to share their lives with the classroom only to be, "...met with resistance." (Schneider, 415)

The main purpose of Schneider's discussion is for children's writing and ideas to be accepted without meeting any resistance, questioning or coercion to another topic. Writing environments and journal responses were the main focus of Schneider's research. Schneider found that no overall patterns surfaced from teachers in response to various scenarios; it seemed a very personal approach was applied by each teacher.

Much uncertainty was prevalent as teachers who were placed in hypothetical (and sometimes actual) situations expressed concern from three different areas: moral reasons, ethical reasons, and legal reasons. (Schneider, 423) Internal and external pressures stemmed from, "Parents, administrators, and society at large..." Some teachers expressed that they would guide students to keep these ideas to themselves, others were unwilling to discuss personal issues, and still others felt comfortable about these topics but sensed their students might be in danger if these topics were discussed. (Schneider, 420)

Still, other teachers stated that they would send students to the guidance counselor or would seek permission from administration before allowing certain topics to be discussed. After all the interviews were conducted, Schneider suggested that teachers should examine their biases,

their classroom environment, and outside environmental influences and how those all impact classroom writing and expression of students. The most important point I believe Schneider makes in the article is, “Teachers do not have to change their beliefs, but they should heighten their awareness of the impact of their beliefs on teaching.” (Schneider, 423) Societal and political aspects of teaching remain in constant spotlight. Fears about job security, school environment, or even personal morality may affect the judgment

### **B) Secondary Points of Focus from the Literature**

Every year at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference, the Master Class in Teaching Children’s Literature allows teachers of children’s literature to come together to share the latest issues concerning the field as well as their ideas on those issues. On November 19, 2005 the Master Class discussed children’s and adolescent literature with gay and lesbian characters. April Whatley Bedford from the University of New Orleans and Lettie K. Albright from Texas Woman’s University serve as the two chairs of the Master Class. Featured speakers in the 2005 Master Class included, “...[children’s literature]authors Nancy Garden and James Howe and professors Linda Leonard Lamme, of the University of Florida, and Patricia Austin of the University of New Orleans.” (Albright & Bedford, 2006, 9) Bedford discussed the importance of including these topics in the elementary school in her college level classes because she thinks they are, “...crucial to a teacher preparatory program.” (Albright & Bedford, 2006, 9) However, some of her pre-service teachers responded with negative attitudes towards homosexuality and the, “...majority admitted that these discussions also made them uncomfortable.” (Albright & Bedford, 2006, 9)

Bedford's purpose for the conference was to bring professors of children's literature together to share ideas, as well as bring authors who write about gay and lesbian characters to these professors in order to brainstorm ways to, "...introduce these books to preservice and practicing teachers." (Albright & Bedford, 2006, 9) Garden spoke about censorship issues persisting into today's school system and society at large despite the first gay/lesbian literature being published in 1969 with John Donovan's novel, *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip*. Walter B. Jones (R), a representative of North Carolina, introduced the Parental Empowerment Act of 2005 (HR 2295) that would prohibit federal funds to be given to a state unless the state constructed review boards for parents in order to oversee purchases for elementary classes and libraries. This legislation came in direct response to Linda De Haan and Stern Nijland's (2002) *King and King*, a picturebook that tells the story of a prince falling in love with another prince.

Another noteworthy speaker and author, James Howe, discussed the success of his 2001 book *The Misfits*. *The Misfits* is ripe with themes regarding bullying, being different and being on the outside as a middle schooler. So successful was this book, that it led to the "No-Name Calling Week," that was observed Nationally in 2004 and 2005. (Albright & Bedford, 2006) "Howe argued that we need to stop apologizing and to stop giving weight to those who argue that homosexuality is against their religion or belief system because the religious argument is irrelevant." (Albright & Bedford, 11) On a final note, Howe, "...feels that we all must be willing to deal with the discomfort that we may feel; discomfort felt by many LGBT people throughout their lives and especially in the coming out process, and discomfort that our students, colleagues, parents, communities, and our society as a whole will have to go through to reach change and

acceptance.” (Albright & Bedford ,12) Dr. Linda Lamme spoke after James Howe about her research with preservice teachers.

Dr. Lamme conducted a critical study of children’s books (2010) dealing with sexual orientation issues and concentrated on how to effectively share her findings with her preservice teachers. “...most of the books are written for non-gay audiences and [that] good stories about kids in LGBT families don’t focus on gay issues are not present.” (Albright & Bedford, 13) Dr. Lamme encountered two responses most often from her preservice teachers: how to avoid controversy and ways they could “...distance themselves from their reactions.”

This leads me to believe that Dr. Lamme’s preservice teachers showed and understanding of the taboo status of LGBT issues being discussed in the classroom, but also a willingness to “distance themselves from their reactions.” The preservice teachers wanted to put aside their own beliefs and reactions about the topic from the individual needs of LGBT students. As a result of this NCTE presentation the final discussion surrounded one crucial theme, “...teachers of children’s literature must be willing to risk discomfort, their own and that of their students, in order to eventually become comfortable with sharing books dealing with sexual orientation.” (Albright & Bedford, 14)

### **C) Conclusions from the Review of Literature**

All of these articles include individual reasons for the specific research conducted, but an overarching theme presents itself: better preparation is needed for preservice teachers to be aware, tolerant, and inclusive in their classrooms in order to create a positive learning environment for all students. Through careful and informed guided discussion coupled with

inclusive strategies, teachers can successfully navigate these often taboo topics, provide a safe atmosphere where students can discuss real issues affecting them, and decrease bullying in and out of the classroom. Teachers, in-service or preservice, should be required to discuss these uncomfortable issues in their training classes not only to deconstruct their own biases, but to give their future students an opportunity to critically think for themselves, free from the grip of predetermined and harmful patriarchal values. A handbook is quite relevant for teachers who must make split second decisions daily. By presenting this type of material to preservice teachers it allows them to formulate their own methodology for including LGBT students into the classroom.

A key part of the handbook allows teachers to examine their own biases. It is important to be self-aware on such issues because it is understandable that not everyone will be comfortable with the notion of discussing such commonly assumed “adult” topics. What is most important about the handbook, is the exposure, and thus normalization of the idea of diverse students and families in the classroom presence. Preservice teachers need to be aware of the reality that elementary-aged students can, and in fact do, question their own sexuality and make decisions at a young age about such matters. If preservice teachers can begin to think of effective facilitation methods, much of the bullying and discomfort from LGBT students and families can be alleviated.

Another important conclusion I drew from the literature was the growing wealth of resources for teachers concerning LGBT topics. For instance, [www.itgetsbetter.org](http://www.itgetsbetter.org) is a perfect example of a website that teachers could direct their students and parents to go to in order to

discuss the sensitive issues related to LGBT students. This website provides an international support group for LGBT students, families, or people who stand in solidarity with them. A blog on the website keeps track of the many events surrounding the “It Gets Better” campaign. More information regarding about “It Gets Better” campaign may be found in the handbook. Besides websites that may act as resources, I’ve found much research rich with strategies to implement both inside and outside the classroom in order to show support for LGBT students and families. Strategies also cover important ways to approach timid or even outright angry parents or administrators who may feel uncomfortable with discussing these themes of diversity in the classroom.

In studying and analyzing all of the aforementioned studies, I feel it is my duty to pick up where these researchers left off and provide a conclusive handbook for preservice teachers that includes: children’s and young adult literature, films to educate preservice teachers on the topic, websites, helping parents, dealing with parents, working with families, and FAQ’s.

It is my sincere hope that from the handbook, preservice teachers will feel more comfortable in approaching issues of bullying, questioning, or loneliness associated with being LGBT, or part of an LGBT family. Also, I hope that this handbook will act as a one-stop resource for teachers, whether it is for professional development or for student and parent resources or for all of the above.

#### **D) Population**

Preservice teachers are the targeted audience because affecting their approach to the treatment of LGBT issues in the classroom spreads the change on a much larger scale than



simply reviewing literature or creating a lesson unit about LGBT issues. Preservice teachers should be taught about LGBT issues much in the same manner as ESOL students. Diversity as an initiative should include more than language barriers, but should span the scope of many different situations, i.e., LGBT issues. With the highly politicized nature of LGBT issues it is more important than ever to reach preservice teachers on this level in order to allow them to *create space* for differences in their future classrooms. The treatment of LGBT issues can be integrated into the classroom without the topic of sex being brought up. Another important reason to provide the handbook specifically for preservice teachers is because by reaching them before they have their own classrooms and set ways, they can be thinking about how to effectively integrate LGBT issues into the classroom.

Preservice teachers will also have the college setting in which they are accustomed to critically think about their classrooms on a new constant basis. By examining their own biases, as the handbook will have them do, preservice teachers will hopefully understand the intention is in no way to change personal beliefs about the morality behind LGBT lifestyles. Rather, the handbook urges acceptance and inclusion into the classroom.

Though many may feel it is not right, that is not the issue. Preservice teachers are quite impressionable because they have not had a classroom yet. Thinking about LGBT students before ever having your own classroom will allow the opportunity to grow as a pre-professional. The evidence By providing better training in preservice classrooms, there can be a positive trend for inclusion of LGBT students in schools, and ultimately, society.

In the next chapter, methodology, I will discuss the various aspects of the framework of this paper. Chapter three includes four different sections—population, informal discussions,

steps to creating the handbook, and anticipated product. In an attempt to affect as many students as possible, I decided to select preservice teachers because they are in the process of learning to become educators. By allowing preservice teachers to effectively examine their personal biases may illuminate how those biases have tremendous effects in the classroom environment. I've decided upon a handbook for preservice teachers as the best instrument. The handbook will serve as a handy instrument, textbook, and go to resource for any needs that may arise—from lesson plans to dealing with parents.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **A) Informal Discussions**

As a preservice teacher, I have found myself in many discussions with cohorts about their future classroom and the various scenarios that may arise. Talks would usually unfold from a question regarding the topic of my thesis. Many asked what it was about, and once I told them my thesis statement, meaningful discussion seemed almost instantaneous.

To understand the complete depth of the knowledge gained from these discussions, I'd like to anonymously identify some key features about my cohorts, and friends. One of them is a mother of three children—the oldest 17, middle 10, and the youngest 7. Her opinion provided great insight from the perspective of a mother as well as a future teacher. I asked her how she would feel if I taught this type of material in the elementary setting—specifically to her 7 year old.

Not surprisingly, she was a little bit apprehensive about the idea of discussing sexuality with elementary aged children. I further questioned her about the topic. I asked her about her own opinions on homosexuality. Though she herself was not homosexual, she felt it was a person's personal decision and it did not bother her one way or another. Understanding her underlying flexibility on the topic made it the discussion smoother for me. I then mentioned the methods which I emphasized in my handbook—discussions centered on various themes diversity versus explicit sexual overtones. It seemed that her biggest apprehension was the fact that she wanted to shelter her child for as long as possible. However, she conceded and felt more comfortable with the idea of discussing same-sex families as part of a family diversity unit, or discussing the idea of interpersonal diversity. Once she realized that the idea was not to push an

agenda but to bring students together by celebrating their differences she felt much more comfortable about the idea.

The other two cohorts, also sitting in on the previous discussion, were in different positions. Both of these cohorts were closer to my age and do not have any children of their own. The majority of the preservice population at UCF is around this age (18-23). One of my cohorts has a sister who is a Lesbian and expressed her complete openness to the idea of including LGBT students and topics into the classroom. However, she did speak about the uncertainty of parental and administration reactions. These fears are legitimate due to the taboo status of LGBT people in society. However, it seemed that a quiet acceptance would come from her in her classroom. At the end of the conversation when I asked her if she would openly discuss anti-LGBT bullying in her classroom if it became an issue, she said she definitely would.

Her answer coupled with the final cohort's answer inspired me further to utilize the preservice population as the target population for my thesis. Their openness and willingness to accept the challenge of openly defending LGBT students and families in the classroom furthered my drive to cater to them in the handbook (though in-service teachers can without a doubt utilize the handbook). The final cohort's opinion was similar to the second cohort's stance. However, the third cohort felt the biggest obstacle to overcome would be the aspect of losing job security by openly defending or teaching LGBT friendly material.

These informal discussions aided in forming the handbook. Being able to partake in candid discussion on the topic of my thesis highlighted the reality that other preservice teachers face when confronting highly taboo issues in their coursework and future classrooms. Cohort one's anxiety of exposing her son to LGBT topics highlighted for me a significant part of the

uphill battle with teaching LGBT issues in the classrooms. I hope that by understanding her desire to shelter her child from certain parts of the world, I will be able to preemptively alleviate parents of their fears. Implicating the taboo status of LGBT issues before teaching them is like adding fuel to an inferno. Instead, I have decided to provide a section in the handbook on how to effectively manage parents and all of the potential problems that may arise from the parents. LGBT issues are real, and deserve to be recognized just as any other diversity initiative should. There are LGBT students and families that deserve to feel welcomed into the classroom. By approaching parents in a positive and inclusive manner, it will settle much of the anxiety that will likely be present.

Cohorts two and three were open to the idea of discussing LGBT issues as they arose in the classroom, however, their pragmatic approach of understanding real problems posed by including LGBT issues in the classroom helped me to formulate another section in the handbook. The section focuses on how to manage reactions from administration, thus ensuring job security. In a time where economic downturn is all too real in our minds, it is understandable why these two cohorts would fear for their livelihoods. It is important to remember, that the material does not have to be presented all at once, as a matter of fact, it needs to be part of the ongoing literature study in the classroom. Integrating, and thus normalizing, LGBT issues along with the other different topics that students already deal with help to further legitimize this marginalized population.

### **B) Steps to Creating the Handbook**

Before its inception, the handbook consisted of ideas and thoughts on how to integrate LGBT friendly strategies into the classroom. Poring through the research literature, it became

clear to me that there was a large hole in the “diversity initiative.” There are countless efforts to include ESOL students into the classroom. In fact, much of my undergraduate career included classes infused with ESOL endorsement requirements. After the completion of my degree, I will be certified to have ESOL students in my classroom. I feel very fortunate to receive that endorsement upon graduation, however, I feel it is just a drop in the ocean compared to other diversity initiatives that have fallen by the wayside. Only one course, Teaching Diverse Populations, covers the *rest* of inclusionary practices. This was very troublesome for me, and the research literature I have personally read, only strengthens my concern.

That sentiment, along with the discussion with my cohorts began my journey towards creating and providing a handbook for preservice teachers. I realized that reaching preservice teachers would help to train the next generation of educators how to effectively identify and teach LGBT issues in the classroom. These are important steps that need to be taken in order to ensure the next generation of LGBT students and families do not have to feel guilty for who they are.

### **C) Anticipated Product**

The handbook I will produce will be the instrument promoted to guide preservice teachers, much like literature and strategies used to guide ESOL students. This handbook will include resources, strategies, lesson ideas and FAQ’s for teachers students and parents. Ideally this handbook will be user-friendly enough so that the preservice teacher can pick it up and find a comprehensive overview of the LGBT issues. Also, if not present in the handbook, at least preservice teachers can locate adequate resources for their further investigation. It is important to have a one stop handbook, almost like a textbook, to refer to because teachers are the first line of

defense against social injustice in the classroom. Preservice teachers will be expected to assume role model and leader positions daily. This handbook will be thorough enough to be a first or final resource on the topic as well as handy enough for quick solutions to problems teachers will undoubtedly face.

In the next chapter, *A Handbook for Preservice Teachers*, I will present my handbook. It will include an Introduction, a chapter for elementary appropriate material, a chapter for early middle school appropriate material, a chapter for what to do as a concerned teacher, and a chapter devoted to technology.

## **Chapter Four: A Handbook for LGBT Inclusion in the Elementary Classroom**

The handbook for preservice teachers serves two purposes. First, it is the outcome or product of this thesis. The second, and most important, purpose of the handbook is to be a one-stop resource for preservice teachers to utilize both in the university as well as in their own future classrooms. This handbook includes a complete resource list of books and their award ratings, summaries, online resources, themed instruction ideas, inclusion strategies, classroom environment ideas, strategies to broach Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) topics with concerned parents and administrators, and FAQ's of concerned teachers/parents. It is my intention to create a Zine , a “noncommercial often homemade or online publication usually devoted to specialized and often unconventional subject matter.” (Merriam-Webster, 2011)



# Including Everyone: A Handbook for LGBT Inclusion in the Elementary Classroom

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“Every major conflict across the globe that have made some progress towards resolution in the past twenty years or thereabout, has taken an inclusive and participatory approach seriously.” – Eddie Island, University of California Regent

“Teaching children to be knowledgeable about differences, supportive of others, and active in changing structures that are oppressive to various groups can all begin within inclusive classrooms. It is within a classroom that openly and directly addresses the interests, needs, and possibilities of all its members that students may best experience democratic structures that empower and support all participants.” – Sapon-Shevin

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## THE ABC'S OF LGBT

In order to fully understand LGBT issues it is important to familiarize yourself with the history, movements, and terms associated. The list provided will hopefully provide a contextual backdrop for LGBT ideas and movements. By gaining a richer understanding of ideas and movements you will be a better resource for the students and families in your class. Duke and McCarthy (2009) asserted that, “We can introduce the teachers of young children to critical theory, queer theory, and third-wave feminist perspectives; and we can teach our teachers to recognize and interrogate the knowledge constructs, value structures, and power relations that maintain systems of privilege and oppression within patriarchal institutions (e.g., Early Childhood Programs and elementary schools).”

**Third Wave Feminism** – Third Wave Feminism is the contemporary movement of Women’s Liberation that began with lesbians and women of color. Included in the movement is: postmodern theory, disability studies, queer theory, and cultural studies. By including all these different theories Third Wave Feminism integrates views from marginalized people throughout history. LGBT people, people with disabilities, people with HIV/AIDS, indigenous people, and people of color are all included in the spectrum of historically marginalized people. (Duke & McCarthy, 2009) “Third-wave feminists believe sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, ableism, and other forms of social oppression are interrelated phenomena that cannot be adequately understood nor effectively addressed in isolation.

**Queer Theory** – This late 1980’s, early 1990’s theory borrowed much of its thought process from postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault wrote extensively on various issues, including sexuality and power. Queer theorists believe “gender and sexual

orientation are socially constructed categories. Gender and sexual identities are not ‘naturally occurring,’ nor ‘fixed’—and cannot be accurately categorized and labeled—because all meaning (about gender, sexuality, and everything else) is constructed through language (or discourse) in particular historical and cultural contexts.” Queer theorists work against many western ideals that oppress marginalized people such as the ideals of heterosexism and what constitutes “normal.”

**Patriarchy** – Merriam-Webster dictionary defines patriarchy as, “social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; broadly: control of men of a disproportionately large share of power; also a society or institution organized according to the principles or practices of patriarchy.” The elementary school is often times referred to as a bastion of patriarchal values in various LGBT academic literature and theory.

**Ally**- The idea of an ally has been ever more important in social justice. In the LGBT community the idea of allies include any person(s) that aid LGBT people in the fight against discrimination and marginalization. Ally relationships may take the form of friendships, professional relationships, teacher to student relationships, and student to student relationships. This list is in no way extensive, and an ally can be simply being an active outspoken voice against

**LGBT (Q)** - A catch all term that refers to people identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. The Q is often referred to as “questioning” and/or “queer.” These terms are used by LGBT people and are recognized as the most inclusive.

**Lesbian** – “A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some other females.” (GLSEN, Safe Space Kit)

**Gay** – “A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some members of the same sex. Although gay can refer to both males and females, many prefer the term “lesbian” for females. Gay is sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to all lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but some prefer the more inclusive term “LGBT.” (GLSEN, 2009)

**Bisexual** – “A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some males and some females.” (GLSEN, 2009)

**Transgender** – “An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.” (GLSEN, 2009)

## **Introduction**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (2005) reports that 74.9% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students frequently hear derogatory terms like faggot at schools, as well as 89.2% reporting common remarks of “that’s so gay,” connoting worthlessness or stupidity. Students as young as the upper elementary level begin to question their identities, and with the negative portrayal of LGBT people in media, it can be a tumultuous journey. The school environment plays an important role in children’s lives. Indeed, much of where children gain confidence and self-esteem stems from their own perception of how well they fit into their classroom and among their peers. However when an environment includes anti-LGBT sentiment in the form of bullying or isolation, the classroom can also serve as a place of discomfort, decreasing a child’s motivation to learn. Beyond losing motivation to learn, students may feel worthless and like they do not belong in their own classroom.

The story of Jamie Nabozny illustrates the trauma that LGBT students may face on a near constant basis. Jamie Nabozny suffered through mock rapes, beatings, and continual harassment in school. So bad was his treatment that he needed surgery due to severe kicks in his stomach. Eventually Nabozny decided to bring this abuse to justice by taking his case to court. The school administration’s lawyers responded in a less than satisfactory manner. The response from the attorney for Jamie’s school administrators said, “...his clients were hurt by the verdict and noted that the years of harassment that Nabozny had been subjected to is the sort of ‘misbehavior the school administrators cannot control.’” Lack of support for LGBT students in schools sets the stage for a tragic story of helplessness, low self-esteem, and outright anger from these students.



As educators, it is our duty to provide a safe environment of student and adult allies whom students can trust. This begins by first breaking the deafening silence.

In September of 2010, the concerned teachers and allies of LGBT students from Anoka-Hennepin school district in Minnesota spoke out about the loss of seven students. These students, within the span of a year, decided to end their pain from LGBT bullying through suicide. In the aftermath, suicide prevention specialists were called in to train teachers, administrators and students how to effectively deal with the string of suicides. These prevention specialists discussed the issue of anti-LGBT bullying despite not being given explicit directions from the district to do so. Confusion surfaced somewhere in the “neutrality” stance held by the district on LGBT lifestyle. The cause of these suicides was anti-LGBT bullying; however, teachers were not able to explicitly discuss these issues with students. Teachers did not know how to respond to these issues as they arose in the classroom. This uncertainty and avoidance is all it takes to send the wrong message to LGBT students and families. Teachers receive the feeling from administration simply to disregard discussion and hopefully avoid the issue altogether. Seven suicides occurred under the neutrality policy. It is not working. Sadly, *this* fear and pressure from administration is what perpetuates the prejudice and marginalization felt by LGBT students and families. It does not begin there, though; it begins with society at large.

Homophobia in the larger society plagues the United States, and schools serve as bastions that preserve the status quo. These types of gender classifications and expectations actually begin from birth with a simple question—pink blanket or blue blanket? From there, consciously or not, we continue to raise children on the basis of gender. The phrase “boys will be boys” is a perfect example of the division of gender. Boys are allowed to be rough and dirty themselves up,

however that phrase leaves the implicit deduction—girls are to be gentle and delicate. Toys, clothes, even behaviors are attributed to assigned gender roles. Because of these strict gender policies children begin to formulate ideas about the world we live in. From these early formative years, children are taught to behave in a certain way. From birth through the first day of school children are already taught to behave and act a certain way based on gender. Once Kindergarten begins, the reinforcement of gender norms becomes even more institutionalized. Because of this systematic approach, it may be impossible for students to escape the harsh homophobic environment. When questioning of identity occurs, it can be a devastating blow to the ego and self-esteem of a student.

LGBT adults face merciless persecution in our society. A perfect example of that prejudice is the lack of marital rights. Same-sex couples are not recognized on a national level, however, they may marry in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and the District of Columbia. The problem lies in the fact that these marriages are not recognized on a national level. Even President Obama came out against gay marriage, though he “supports full civil unions and federal rights for LGBT couples.” Steps towards equality are slow in forthcoming.

However, some progress towards equal rights for LGBT population has occurred quite recently. The repeal of the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Policy in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (2010) allowed military personnel to be openly gay in the armed forces. Another step in the right direction occurred on January 11, 2011 when the Minneapolis Board of Education “...passed a resolution instructing district administrators to develop a district-wide system for tracking incidents of anti-LGBT harassment.”

Imagine being a child and facing persecution from your peers, teachers, and often times, even parents for being who you are. Children all around the country face this reality daily. It is time that we put our personal beliefs aside and pursue a higher purpose—including everyone into our classrooms and society regardless of their who they are—including their sexual orientation. Students do not ask to be put in a situation of open persecution from peers and adults alike. Students must simply make the bold choice to be who they are or suffer quietly.

As educators, we've placed ourselves at the forefront of society. We are the ones deemed responsible for raising a new generation in acceptable ways. This great power and duty should be used wisely and for the good of everyone. In this handbook I have attempted to piece together effective strategies and resources that will help facilitate the inclusion process of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender students and families into the classroom. These students and families deserve to be recognized and praised as being valued members in the classroom and our society. It does not matter whether or not you may agree with a person's lifestyle or choices. What does matter is that we treat everyone with the dignity and respect they deserve as fellow humans that feel hurt, pain, love, and compassion the same way as everyone else.

It is never too early to start discussing these issues with students. The level of explicitness obviously increases as children mature. What we as educators need to do is model inclusionary practices in our classrooms, in our lives, and in our hearts. If students are surrounded in environments of praise for who they are as well as surrounded by allies, they can begin to take on the giant task of being LGBT in a society that is not welcoming toward them. They need our support, and it is time to end the silence.

## Elementary Literature

Children's Literature dealing with the various topics in LGBT life is obviously quite sparse. However, within the existing literature there are many different divisions by topic. Much of the literature merely exposes the existence of LGBT families to straight families. Though there may not be a wealth of books available, having them around aids in normalizing the concept of diverse families in the classroom. The *Horn Book* Scale rates these books on a scale of 1 (excellent) to 6 (not worthy). Also important to mention for the *Horn Book* Scale is a rating of NR. NR means they are, "...published outside the United States, they are recently published, or they are produced by small presses that are not reviewed by *Horn Book*." (Lamme, 210) This scale can be a way for you to judge the quality of the literature you share with your class, as quality is very important. Beyond the numeric scale, the *Horn Book* Scale also categorizes books by fiction and nonfiction. Fiction books are listed by their grade level or their genre, and nonfiction is categorized using the Dewey Decimal system. It is important to note that the *Horn Book* Scale utilizes a criterion based method for rating books.

Suggested grade level to present these books will accompany the *Horn Book* Scale. The books will only fall into two different categories: primary and intermediate. Primary grades include Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. Intermediate grades include 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. The decision to split these books between primary and intermediate lies with subject matter and illustration of the books. Some books may present more mature subject matter such as AIDS and the loss of a loved one, yet include very simple illustrations for younger audiences. Some books may present themes appropriate for the younger (and older) ages—such as the idea of diverse families with illustrations that may be less interesting for the primary

grades. Both instances of books may present a conundrum when selecting the appropriate book for your grade level. In every case, it is important to screen the books yourself and make a judgment call. You know your class and you know what works for them. That being said, suggested grade level is an attempt to help guide you through the literature in an efficient and meaningful way.

Below is a conclusive list of books for elementary aged students that will be divided by topic. Also included in the list will be the *Horn Book* Scale rating and a brief summary with the suggested grades for reading.

“1 = Outstanding, noteworthy in style, content, and/or illustration.

2 = Superior, well above average.

3 = Recommended, satisfactory in style, content and/or illustration.

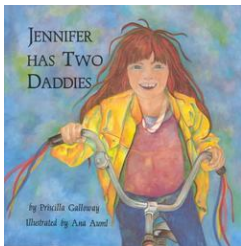
4 = Recommended, with minor flaws.

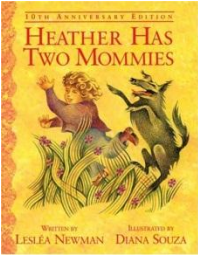
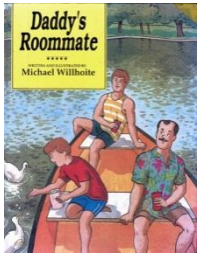
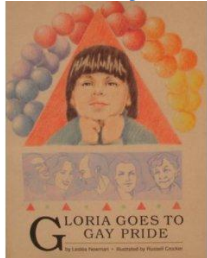
5 = Marginal, seriously flawed, but with some redeeming quality.

6 = Unacceptable in style, content, and/or illustration.”

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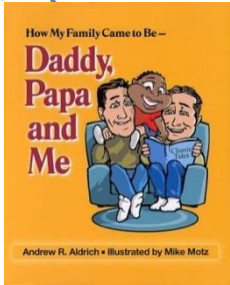
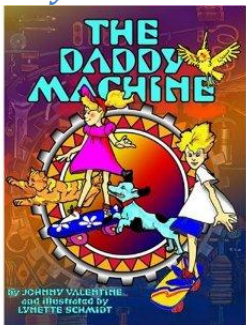
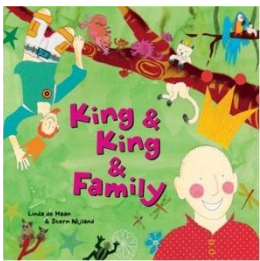
**Table 1: Picture Books : Lesbian/Gay Parents ( Lamme, 2010)**

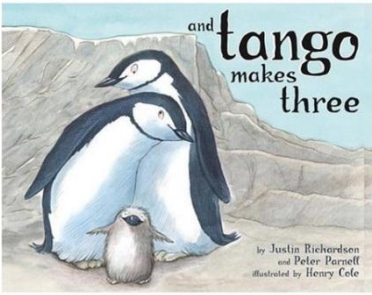
<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b><i>Horn Book Scale/ Summary</i></b>
<p><i><b>Jennifer Has Two Daddies</b></i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	Priscilla Galloway	<p><i>NR</i></p> <p>Jennifer Has Two Daddies is about a little girl who belongs to a family where her father has divorced because he realized he was gay. The theme of divorce in this story can be a great jumping off point for discussion. Many children deal with divorce in the family. In addition, Jennifer also has to deal with issues of being part of an LGBT family.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>

<p><i>Heather Has Two Mommies</i></p>  <p>(Goodreads.com)</p>	<p>Leslea Newman</p>	<p>NR</p> <p>In Heather Has Two Mommies, Heather became part of an LGBT family through artificial insemination. This type of story may be a bit too explicitly sexual for some audiences, however, it could be part of a diversity unit for the older grades. (Intermediate)</p>
<p><i>Daddy's Roommate</i></p>  <p>(Proudparenting.com)</p>	<p>Michael Willhoite</p>	<p>5</p> <p>In Daddy's Roommate, the young boy was once part of a nuclear family, however, the father and mother divorced because the father realized he was gay. The mother tells the young boy that the father is gay and the little boy is not upset because he sees that his father and his new "roommate" share their love for one another. This book attempts to normalize homosexuality. (Intermediate)</p>
<p><i>Gloria Goes to Gay Pride</i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Leslea Newman</p>	<p>NR</p> <p>This book surrounds Gloria and her two mothers attending a pride parade. This book includes the marginalization of LGBT peoples when Gloria and her mothers encounter "anti-gay" signs on the side of the parade. Also included is a celebration of solidarity for LGBT families when it discusses the support Gloria and her mothers receive from other members in the community. This book may be a great way to discuss the ups and downs of being different, but yet still touches on the idea of being happy and part of a loving family. (Intermediate)</p>
<p><i>How Would you feel If Your Dad Was Gay?</i></p>	<p>Ann Heron &amp; Meredith Maran</p>	<p>4</p> <p>This book touches on the bullying aspect of being part of an LGBT family. Jasmine has three dads, two of them in a relationship with one another and a third stepfather. She</p>

 <p>(Glsen.org)</p>		<p>does not see the issue with having 3 fathers, and is in fact delighted by it. Her brother is subject to bullying at school. Jasmine's fathers are concerned and decide to discuss these issues with the school's principal. This story illustrates healthy support and normalization of diverse family settings.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>
<p><b><i>Zack's Story: Growing Up with Same-Sex Parents</i></b> (nonfiction)</p>  <p>(Goodreads.com)</p>	<p>Keith Elliot Greenberg</p>	<p>3</p> <p>This nonfiction story discusses Zack's life with two mothers and a father that lives nearby. It is a first person account of living in an LGBT family. Zack addresses common concerns about whether or not he will grow up to be gay or not. He even goes as far as to say that he wants to grow up and get married to a woman. The topic of artificial insemination is discussed and defined in the end of the book. Though not graphic, it still touches on the idea of sexual reproduction.</p> <p>(Intermediate)</p>
<p><b><i>Felicia's Favorite Story</i></b></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Leslea Newman</p>	<p>NR</p> <p>A heartwarming twist on a common question from young children of "Where do I come from," <i>Felicia's Favorite Story</i> centers around Felicia asking her two mothers about how she came to be a part of their family. This is a light-hearted and playful discussion that helps students who are part of diverse families see themselves in literature.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>



<p><i>How My Family Came to Be: Daddy, Papa and Me</i></p>  <p>(Goodreads.com)</p>	<p>Andrew Aldrich</p>	<p>NR</p> <p>Not only does this story discuss being part of an LGBT family, but it also includes being part of an interracial family. This book reiterates the theme of family and how it can be quite diverse, yet still full of love. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>The Daddy Machine</i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Johnny Valentine</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Written in true children's literature child, <i>The Daddy Machine</i> enchants young readers with the fantastical idea of creating a machine that produces daddies. Two young girls who have lesbian mothers ponder the thought of what it would be like to have a daddy. It is a comical and entertaining book that still works to normalize the idea of being part of an LGBT family. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>King &amp; King &amp; Family</i></p>  <p>(Goodreads.com)</p>	<p>Linda deHaan &amp; Stern Nijland</p>	<p>4</p> <p>This whimsical sequel to <i>King and King</i> features the newlywed kings on their honeymoon. The story discusses how their honeymoon takes place in a jungle setting and how they adopt their very own little girl. It follows like the plot of a fairy tale and is filled with bright and colorful pictures that will be sure to enchant readers. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>And Tango Makes Three</i></p>	<p>Justin Richardson &amp; Peter Parnell</p>	<p>4</p> <p>This children's picturebook follows two penguins in the Brooklyn Zoo in New York who happen to be gay. There is never once mention of being gay, however audiences do know that there are two daddy</p>

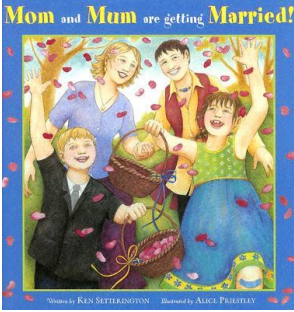


(Goodreads.com)

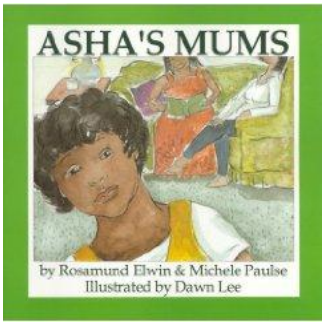
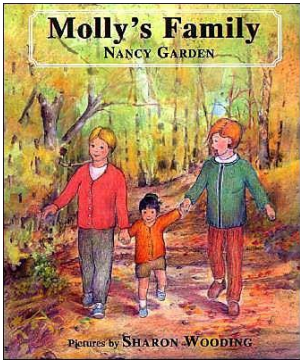
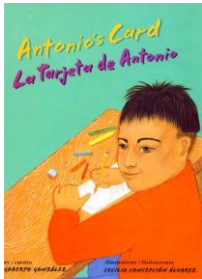
penguins. The sympathetic zookeeper sees the two penguins struggling to hatch a rock, and places an orphan egg in their nest. *And Tango Makes Three* is a very subtle discussion about LGBT topics and will be sure to warm the hearts of many young and old audiences alike.  
(Primary)

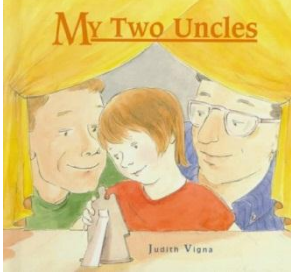
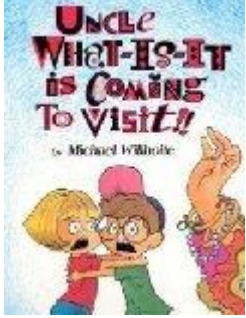
**Table 2: Picture Books: Gay Marriage, Commitment Ceremonies and Separation**  
(Lamme, 213)

Title	Author	<i>Horn Book Scale</i>
<p><i>Saturday Is Pattyday</i></p>  <p>(Lesleakids.com)</p>	Leslea Newman	<p>5</p> <p>This story again discusses the theme of divorce in a family and how a young child must deal with it. In this case, Frankie's two mom's are the ones who are getting divorced. This helps serve the purpose of normalization of LGBT families in the classroom.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>
<p><i>Daddy's Wedding</i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	Michael Willhoite	<p>NR</p> <p><i>Daddy's Wedding</i> is the follow-up to <i>Daddy's Roommate</i> and discusses the commitment ceremony between Daddy and his life partner Frank. Because of the true-life depiction, it may incite some discomfort, yet it is.</p> <p>(Primary/Intermediate)</p>
<p><i>King &amp; King</i></p> 	Linda deHaan & Stern Nijland	<p>2</p> <p><i>King &amp; King</i> is a playful display of color and life. It is a fanciful look at how the prince must find a mate after his mother tells him he is to marry. Bored with all the princesses that come through, he finally falls in love when the last princess comes through—with her brother. The mother happily concedes to the marriage and King and King are married.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>

(Search.barnesandnoble.com)		
<p data-bbox="212 365 560 401"><i><b>Mom and Mum Are Getting</b></i></p> <p data-bbox="334 432 438 468"><i><b>Married</b></i></p>  <p data-bbox="318 837 454 867">(Amazon.com)</p>	<p data-bbox="703 365 919 401">Ken Setterington</p>	<p data-bbox="1224 365 1243 394">4</p> <p data-bbox="1037 401 1433 615">Rosie is excited to learn that her mom and mum are going to get married. This story discusses Rosie's thoughts about her role in the wedding and the excitement that surrounds their marriage. (Primary)</p>

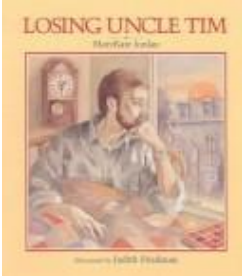
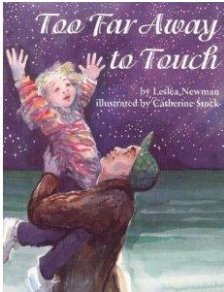
**Table 3: Picture Books: Homophobia (Lamme, 217)**

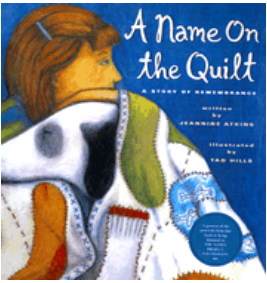
Title	Author	<i>Horn Book Scale</i>
<p><i>Asha's Mums</i></p>  <p>(<i>The rainbowbabies.com</i>)</p>	<p>Rosamund Elwin &amp; Michele Paulse</p>	<p><i>NR</i></p> <p>When Asha brings a field trip form signed by two mothers, her teacher questions it and tells her she cannot have two moms. This story discusses the adverse and sometimes uncomfortable moments that children must face when they belong to an LGBT family. However, Asha's mothers love her brother Mark and her very much and it is through that they sustain a healthy family unit. (Intermediate)</p>
<p><i>Molly's Family</i></p>  <p>(<i>Nancygarden.com</i>)</p>	<p>Nancy Garden</p>	<p><i>4</i></p> <p><i>Molly's Family</i> is a gentle approach to the topic of family diversity. Kindergartener, Molly, draws a picture of her two moms and incites a negative response from one of her classmates. Her teacher responds by saying that if Molly has a family with two moms then that is a type of family. After questioning her moms, Molly finds out that family's come in all different shapes and sizes. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio</i></p> 	<p>Rigoberto Gonzalez</p>	<p><i>4</i></p> <p>Not only does this book discuss issues that children may have being part of an LGBT family, but it also includes a bilingual approach (Spanish). Antonio has issues with making a card for his mother with Mother's Day coming up after a classmate makes negative remarks about her. This may be used around the topic of bullying in the classroom. (Primary)</p>

(Glsen.org)		
<p><i><b>My Two Uncles</b></i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Judith Vigna</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Elly is a young child caught in the middle of a common LGBT family issue. Though his own father and mother are not LGBT, he has an uncle who is a gay man that has a partner. Elly's grandfather creates the source of homophobia in the family and Elly seeks out his father's wisdom on why his grandfather does not like his uncle and his uncle's friend.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>
<p><i><b>Uncle What-Is-It Is Coming to Visit</b></i></p>  <p>(Booksforkidsingayfamilies.blogspot.com)</p>	<p>Michael Willhoite</p>	<p>5</p> <p>In <i>Uncle What-Is-It Is Coming to Visit</i>, the anti-LGBT sentiment comes from the main characters, Tiffany and Igor. The two siblings, before allowing their mother to explain what the meaning of 'gay' is, find out from classmates. This horrifies them, and they are pleasantly surprised when Uncle "What-Is-It" shows up. Uncle Brett is nothing like they were expecting. A humorous, and true to life, concept of how children may react to LGBT family members.</p> <p>(Primary/Intermediate)</p>



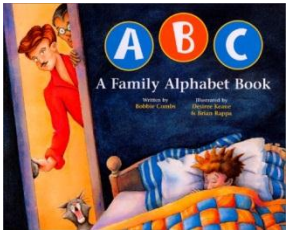
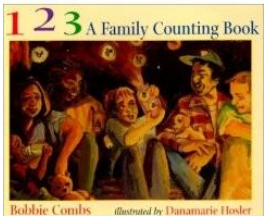
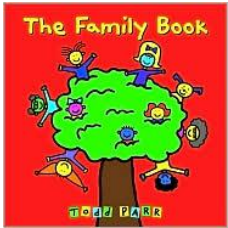
**Table 4: Picture Books: AIDS (Lamme, 219)**

Title	Author	<i>Horn Book Scale</i>
<p><i><b>Losing Uncle Tim</b></i></p>  <p>(Biblio.com)</p>	<p>Mary Kate Jordan</p>	<p>2</p> <p>The reality of the vast scope of AIDS is brought to light in this sad story. Daniel, Tim's nephew, finds it hard to cope with the loss of his most beloved Uncle. Although this book highlights a usually stereotypical subject matter (as most AIDS victims are not like Uncle Tim—white or gay), it still allows students to reflect on the effects of losing an LGBT family member to a devastating disease such as AIDS. This book may find good use as part of helping a student deal with death in the family, or it may even serve as an insight on disease in a diverse science curriculum.</p> <p>(Intermediate)</p>
<p><i><b>Tiger Flowers</b></i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Patricia Quinlan</p>	<p>3</p> <p><i>Tiger Flowers</i> is another reflective book about how Joel deals with the loss of his gay Uncle Michael. In the story, Joel also must cope with the loss of his uncle's "friend" Peter, who suffered from the same fate as uncle Michael. As in <i>Losing Uncle Tim</i>, <i>Tiger Flowers</i> also serves as a book that can help students deal with death or loss in the family.</p> <p>(Intermediate)</p>
<p><i><b>Too Far Away to Touch</b></i></p> 	<p>Leslea Newman</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Unlike <i>Tiger Flowers</i> and <i>Losing Uncle Tim</i>, <i>Too Far Away to Touch</i> includes an uncle that is still alive, but going through AIDS treatment. The book discusses how the uncle loses hair and must take pills for the disease, as well as the fatigue associated with treatment. <i>Too Far Away to Touch</i> is quite poignant and illustrates the sense of loss that everyone feels when in the process of losing a family member.</p>

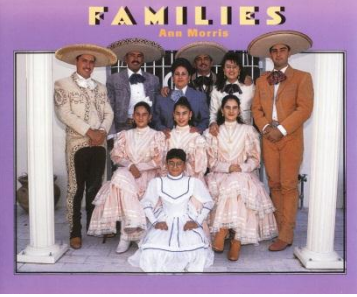
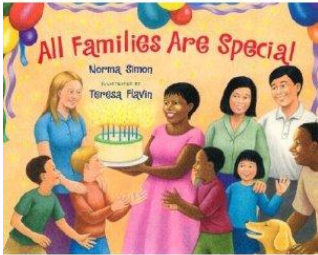
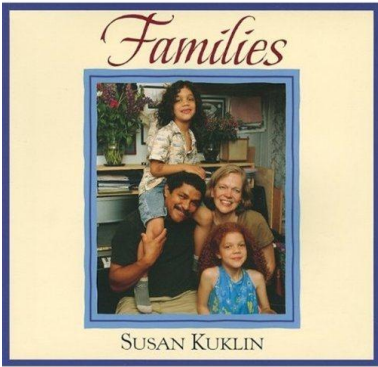
(Amazon.com)		(Primary/Intermediate)
<p data-bbox="201 348 571 447"><i>A Name on the Quilt: A Story of Remembrance</i></p>  <p data-bbox="326 793 451 821">(Albris.com)</p>	<p data-bbox="708 348 914 380">Jeannine Atkins</p>	<p data-bbox="1224 348 1243 380">5</p> <p data-bbox="1052 386 1419 625">A feeling of loss and sorrow still pervades this book, despite the coming together of a family in a time of loss. The family comes together in memoriam of a lost uncle. In the end of the book the AIDS Memorial Quilt is explained in detail.</p> <p data-bbox="1110 632 1360 659">(Primary/Intermediate)</p>



**Table 5: Elementary Books: Families (Lamme, 221)**

Title	Author	<i>Horn Book Scale</i>
<p><i>ABC: A Family Alphabet Book</i></p>  <p>(JackieReeve.com)</p>	<p>Bobbie Combs &amp; Desiree Keene</p>	<p><i>NR</i></p> <p>This simple ABC discovery book discusses the various day to day things that happen in a child's family life. The story takes readers through the entire alphabet—and through a family with two dads. Normalizing LGBT families occurs in this story and will be a delight to readers who can see themselves in the text. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>1, 2, 3: A Family Counting Book</i></p>  <p>(Kaboodle.com)</p>	<p>Bobbie Combs</p>	<p><i>NR</i></p> <p>Another story by author Bobbie Combs that teaches readers how to count from 1-20, and includes LGBT families into the story. Both educational and helpful for students, <i>1, 2, 3: A Family Counting Book</i> aids readers in understanding the diversity of families, and of course, counting to 20! (Primary)</p>
<p><i>The Family Book</i></p>  <p>(Search.barnesandnoble.com)</p>	<p>Todd Parr</p>	<p><i>4</i></p> <p>A celebration of family diversity, <i>The Family Book</i> discusses lesbian families, gay families, single divorced families, and relays to readers that all of these families are “special.” This book places children of LGBT families in text that they are exposed to, and helps to ease the tension that may be felt from classmates or other homophobic sources. (Primary)</p>
<p><i>It's OK to Be Different</i></p>	<p>Todd Parr</p>	<p><i>4</i></p> <p>This may very well be a child's first introduction to the concept of diversity. In <i>It's OK to Be Different</i>, simple sentences declaring “It's okay to be...” allows students to</p>

 <p>(Bilerico.com)</p>		<p>understand that there are differences among people, and that those differences are completely ok. (Primary)</p>
<p><i><b>Families: A Celebration of Diversity, Commitment, and Love</b></i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	<p>Aylette Jenness</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Author Aylette Jenness discusses 17 different families in this nonfiction look at diverse family units. The beauty of this book is that it can fit perfectly into a unit on families and how they are all unique and different. The family structures range from being adopted to divorce to having gay parents. A note of interest: this book began as a traveling exhibition. (Primary)</p>
<p><i><b>Who's in a Family?</b></i></p>  <p>(Blog.glad.org)</p>	<p>Robert Skutch</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Celebrating the theme of family diversity, <i>Who's in a Family?</i> asks the question to readers. Readers are asked to describe who is in their family. The whole concept behind the book lies in the fact that no two families are alike, and that is perfectly alright. This book is perfect for use in a unit on families. (Primary)</p>
<p><i><b>Families</b></i></p>	<p>Ann Morris</p>	<p>3</p> <p>A great addition to a unit on families, <i>Families</i>, discusses the diversity of families across the world. The main theme from the story is that all people are part of families, despite the fact that they may look different. The book is filled pictures and maps of places and people from across the globe.</p>

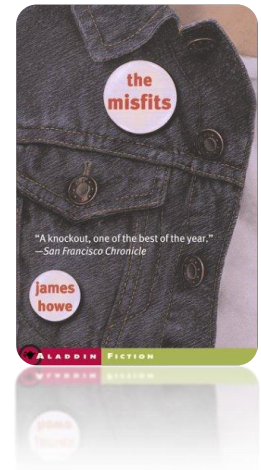
 <p>(Harpercollinschildrens.com)</p>		(Primary)
<p><i>All Families Are Special</i></p>  <p>(Amazon.com)</p>	Norma Simon	<p>4</p> <p>A perfect book for sparking class discussion on family diversity, <i>All Families are Special</i> tells of Mrs. Mack's class in the midst of describing their families. Descriptions of families range from the various sizes of families to having LGBT family members, and many other differences that are celebrated by Mrs. Mack. This may be a great platform for a teacher to take in the classroom after reading the book to students. Students can model the format of the book and discuss the different families they have.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>
<p><i>Families</i></p>  <p>(love-bookstore.com)</p>	Susan Kuklin	<p>NR</p> <p>Susan Kuklin takes readers through 15 diverse families in this nonfiction exploration of what families are. Included in the book are multicultural families, LGBT families, single families, families with adopted children, and many more. A great fit for a unit discussing diverse families.</p> <p>(Primary)</p>

## Middle School Literature (6<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Middle school literature in this handbook will only be meant for 6<sup>th</sup> grade because my degree only certifies me from K-6<sup>th</sup> grade. I think it is important to stay within the realm of my degree and expertise in order to legitimize the handbook.

Therefore, since I am only including 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I've decided upon only including two books by author James Howe—*The Misfits* and *Totally Joe*.

(1) *The Misfits* – This novel for middle school aged students follows four friends who are on the fringe socially. One of them is overweight, another gay, another quite outspoken, and another is dubbed a “hooligan.” This novel is the experience of them rising against their school. They deem themselves “The Misfits” when they form a third student council voting group. Often times making waves with others, including the principal, The Misfits must truly express the hurt they have endured from bullying in order to reach others. Though serious in content, the tone of the book allows students to feel the lightness and well-placed humor that Howe perfectly weaves into the novel. Students will be encouraged to be proud of who they are as individuals.



(2) *Totally Joe* – A follow-up novel from Howe that focuses solely on the gay character, Joe. An authentic bildungsroman infused with humor and lightness characterizes *Totally Joe*. Howe does a wonderful job of normalizing the idea of being a gay 7<sup>th</sup> grader. Joe Bunch is alive and for students who feel they aren't represented in the literature. *Totally Joe* is a great read for LGBT middle school students.

## Strategies and Unit Ideas for Inclusion

Broaching the topic of LGBT issues in the elementary classroom may be unnerving for many educators. But a sensitive and effective approach is not impossible. Part of making a commitment to LGBT



[LGBT Pride Flag \(crwflags.com\)](http://crwflags.com) 1

inclusion in the classroom is to ensure that your classroom is a safe environment. What constitutes a safe environment? A safe environment is one where students and families feel welcomed and respected. As a teacher, a small yet powerful method to integrate LGBT families into the classroom, can be putting up the LGBT pride flag, or the rainbow flag that symbolizes different components of the LGBT community: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit. An additional black stripe at the bottom represents hope for a cure to AIDS.

Another great strategy for inclusion is setting a mentality for yourself as a teacher in the classroom that focuses first and foremost as a safe mentor for your students. The classroom should be the vehicle by which you can establish an atmosphere of safety. Students should feel like they are able to perform to the best of their abilities without feeling nervous about peer or teacher criticisms. Achievement should be highly celebrated in the classroom and students' diverse abilities should be celebrated too.

Once a comfortable atmosphere has been established, teacher and students are comfortable with each other, and student achievement is celebrated, you can begin to integrate small groups in the class. Small group discussions and groups may be great ways for students to

become acclimated with each other, establishing a classroom community of openness, understanding, and empathy. The idea of small groups in education is not new. Small groups provide a microcosm of the classroom where students may feel less pressure due to size, and may open up and connect with their peers. Every student has the chance to express his or her opinion and feeling in small group settings. Once small groups become part of routine in the classroom, switching those groups will encourage students to get to know each other. Small student groups and discussions may be used in all subjects.

Reading response journals provide another great way for classroom inclusion. After selecting a book with LGBT issues, you may have the class write in their reading response journals. Questions may come from a specific lesson, or students may simply write their reactions to what they have just read. Journaling is an important line of communication to keep with your students. It may be a good medium for shy students to communicate their feelings on LGBT issues and bullying.

A step further may be for you to have a back and forth journal with a student who feels bullied. Peers don't have to know about the journal. Send it home with a student weekly, where they can write in the privacy of their own home and then bring it back to school. This type of personalization shows students that they have someone who is willing to stand by their side, and sometimes the only one who will stand by their side.

Being a teacher means many things. One of the most essential parts about being a teacher is to provide your students a safe and comfortable learning environment. They may not be able to function at optimal levels if they feel endangered. These steps, along with activities (see below),

and lesson plans (see appendix) are excellent, effective ways to help stand by LGBT students and families.

### **Activities to do:**

#### **(1) “Stand Up” (Adapted from Tolerance.org by Mollentze)**

This is an activity you can utilize in the classroom in order to discuss the options students have when dealing with bullying, whether directly or indirectly. This will inspire students to discuss the difference between “tattling”, and, asking an adult for help in a difficult situation. “Stand Up” allows for meaningful discussion on the consequences, positive and negative, of standing up for someone when they are being bullied. Students will have two sets of cards to choose from: “Fear factor” and “Stand up.” The former sets of cards portray actions that a bully would do, and the latter portray actions an anti-bully would do. This is a great introduction into bullying that goes beyond mere platitudes that usually accompany the anti-bullying campaigns in schools.

#### **(2) Contract Bullying – (adapted from Teaching Tolerance by Mollentze)**

A mini-unit designed by teacher Allison LaBree-Whittlef who teaches in Minnesota. The mini-unit involves an in-depth look at bullying, defining different types of bullying, and challenging students to stand up against bullying. This unit is split into three different steps. You can refer to this in Appendix C.

#### **(3) Adapted from the GLSEN Safe Space Kit – Check Yourself: Understanding Your Own Beliefs.**

Before you can make a difference in the life of a student, you must know and understand them. Another critical part of the equation is knowing yourself. This activity adapted from

GLSEN's Safe Space Kit will allow educators to step out from themselves and evaluate where they stand in regards to teaching and advocating for all their students, including LGBT students.

**Understanding Your Own Beliefs** (adapted from GLSEN by Mollentze)

1. What would your reaction be if someone were to come out to you as LGBT?
2. If your child, family member, or close friend came out to you as LGBT how would you feel?
3. Would you go to a physician whom you thought was LGBT if they were of a different gender than you? What if they were the same gender as you?
4. Have you ever supported LGBT causes by being part of a march, an event, or any other type of activity? Why or why not?
5. If someone asked you to name a famous LGBT person, would you be able to?
6. Have you ever laughed at or made fun of LGBT people?
7. Have you ever stood up for an LGBT person being bullied or harassed? Why or why not?
8. How would you react if you thought someone thought of you as LGBT, even if you were not?

These questions are intended to create space in your mind for the idea of what it would be like as an LGBT person. This important step in recognizing where you stand in regards to LGBT



people will help you assess how you can effectively advocate, support, and create a safe environment in your classroom where all students will be encouraged to flourish.

## **Unit Themes**

### **1. Diverse Families**

A unit theme on Diverse Families may include as many or as little books as you want. Focus must revolve around the fact that there are diverse families and that no matter the make-up, a family needs only love to be a family. To gather ideas, simply browse through the books provided above, and pull as many or as few as you'd like.

### **2. Being Different is OK**

A unit theme on Being Different is OK would also be a great topic to include LGBT books in. The main idea behind it would be to value the individuality of yourself as well as others who are around you. This theme can be expressed through various amounts of literature as well as through lesson plans. Students need to know understand that they are allowed to be who they are without threat of being bullied.

### **3. Respect Others and Stand Up Against Bullies**

The theme of respect and standing up to bullies should inform students that respecting others is not only a nicety; it is a rule in the classroom and in life. Encourage students to seek out victims of bullying and to help show the victims that they are cared about. Reading books that normalize LGBT students into the classroom will also help to set your own personal tone as a teacher on the subject. Reading these types of books will allow you to model a suitable response. Responses do not have to be in *favor* of LGBT lifestyle, but a tone that reflects tolerance is a must.

### **4. Love**

The age old ubiquitous theme of love fits perfectly into inclusionary practices in the

classroom. Ideas of loving people for who they are can help set the stage for a theme on love in many contexts. Students should be challenged to come up with ideas of how love can include everyone. A teacher should guide students through the process of identifying what love means to them. Reading books together on the subject of love can include families who have LGBT members in them. The teacher may opt to have students keep a journal of the various types of love they encounter in their literature.

## **5. Being Special**

Being special provides another great theme for exploring diversity among students. A great way to incorporate the theme of being special could be to ask students to complete an autobiography of their lives. The autobiography must include at least three special traits about themselves. Students will be asked to share this with the class. After students present their autobiographies, literature can be introduced. Encourage students to identify unique qualities about the characters in the books you share with them. First allowing students to identify their own special qualities will allow them to more easily identify the special qualities of others. Once the autobiography and literature section of the theme is over, it is then appropriate for the teacher to impart the message that everyone has special qualities that equally respected and praised among everyone.

## **What if I'm Scared to Lose My Job? Or What if I don't agree with LGBT lifestyles?**

As a teacher concerned for their students, it is obvious that you want to create the most positive learning environment for your students. With the world how it is today, it is understandable that you may feel apprehension towards the subject of LGBT inclusion, whether it be for personal reasons or not. Hopefully throughout the course of this handbook you have realized that the notion of including LGBT students and literature into the classroom is not an attempt to change your beliefs. Rather, it is call to our common humanity; we need to understand that children who are LGBT or are part of LGBT families must suffer through much scrutiny and disapproval from society at large.

We as educators need to model the behavior we would like to see in the world. Staying silent in the face of LGBT discrimination is an injustice to all. You do not have to do anything in your classroom that you are nervous to do. A smarter decision would be to gauge your class, gauge your parents, and gauge your administration to see where they stand on such topics. Though it may be an uphill battle, it is one worth fighting for. What if anti-segregation had not been fought for in schools? How different would we be today? This is no different. Pick your battles wisely, but make sure that at the end of the day, students know it is never ok to bully someone because they look different, or are part of a different type of family, or make different choices than other students might.

## **Internet/Video Resources**

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century marches forward, the presence of the internet in our lives becomes larger with every passing minute. Teachers are expected to stay on the up and up on these trends, and because of that, it is important to have a relevant list of online resources that parents and students alike can utilize when discussing such sensitive issues. The list below is in no way exhaustive, but it is a great start at beginning to grasp the various resources available to educators, students, and families alike.

Recommending a site for a student or a parent is up to your own discretion and personal judgment. Ensure that you go through each of these websites before you recommend them, as you may want to ensure that your own personal classroom situation will not be hindered by any items on them. Also, it is important to note, that you should never send a child to a website without first checking through it first. Before you share any information with a student it is vital that you speak to the parents first about it, regardless of whether the students are in Kindergarten or 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

One final note, I would like to break down the types of resources this next section will provide. Some of the websites are national organizations or state organizations devoted towards helping LGBT families and youth. Some of the websites are the author's websites for children's books.

### **(1) [www.Itgetsbetter.org](http://www.Itgetsbetter.org) :**

Began by columnist Dan Savage of Savage Love and his partner Terry, the *It Gets Better Project* provides a pillar of support for young adults who feel the torture of daily bullying, low self-esteem, or simply need a source to see themselves in the rest of the world. *It Gets Better*

began as a series of YouTube videos urging teens to consider alternative methods of coping with being LGBT besides suicide. In fact, Savage posted the first YouTube video in response to the seven students who committed suicide and made headlines last fall for taking such brash actions in response to their personal bullying.

This website has grown exponentially and includes submissions from President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Google, Facebook, and many more big hitting names. The *It Gets Better Project* serves as a mirror for LGBT students who find they struggle against who they are and struggle to find any friends or support. Included on the website are: blog spaces, a place to take a pledge for aiding LGBT friends, a place to add your story, a place to watch videos of other LGBT people speaking out, a place to get help, a place to find out when events are occurring, and a place to buy merchandise that helps support the cause. Savage and his partner Terry are releasing a book soon entitled *It Gets Better* and that too will serve as an invaluable source for LGBT young adults. Note: Though this website is not appropriate for elementary aged children, I felt it was important to include on the list of resources because it may be utilized as early as middle school to help LGBT students who may face many peer bullies.

**(2) www.Glsen.org :**

“*GLSEN*, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, *GLSEN* envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. *GLSEN* seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community.”

*GLSEN* provides a myriad of resources for educators to help effectively combat anti-LGBT sentiment in the school climate. The *ThinkB4YouSpeak* website, also part of *GLSEN*, began in order to inform straight students about the harm that comes from using language geared against LGBT youth, and the effect it has in the school environment. It also aids straight students in how to utilize language that will show support of LGBT youth. Another resource for educators and students alike is to recognize the National Day of Silence. This day is a show of solidarity for LGBT students by educators, LGBT students, and straight allies alike. The *GLSEN* website includes an entire section for organizers both in public schools and universities. The section includes a manual on how to effectively spread the message about your beliefs, without having to say a word. This year the Day of Silence is on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Still another resource from *GLSEN* is the No-Name Calling Week. The next scheduled No-Name Calling Week is January 23-27, 2012. Author James Howe was the inspiration behind the No-Name Calling Week because of his book for young adults called *The Misfits*. The No-Name Calling Week is an invaluable shoe-in for educators who would like to tackle the issue of name-calling in schools.

A final mention of one of the many *GLSEN* resources is the Safe Space Kit. A crucial component for any educator interested in providing a safe learning environment for all students, including LGBT students, this Safe Space Kit provides information regarding issues, how to support students, how to advocate students and how to be an ally for them in the classroom.

*GLSEN* provides countless resources for educators, including many PDF's and manuals with step-by-step instructions on how to effectively integrate these activities into the classroom. Included in this appendix are a few carefully selected lessons from the *GLSEN* website that you

can use as preservice teachers to begin planning for your own No-Name Calling lessons. Also included later in the handbook is an activity for educators that will help to assess their own beliefs and how those beliefs interact with teaching LGBT students or families.

**(3) [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org) :**

*Teaching Tolerance*, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, is a website that includes many different resources for educators. Not only does the *Teaching Tolerance* website include a magazine discussing diversity issues, but it also includes professional development, classroom activities, teaching kits, and resources. Mix It Up is a national campaign sponsored by Teaching Tolerance that promotes students to cross social borders throughout the school year. The self-proclaimed mission of Teaching Tolerance is, “to promote respect for differences and an appreciation of diversity in the classroom and beyond.” This website provides a multitude of different diversity issues that may help educators beyond LGBT issues.

The Jamie Nabozny story on DVD is available free of charge for educators who inquire on the website. Included in the kit is a copy of the DVD that details the horrific bullying Jamie Nabozny encountered in school. Also included in the kit is a viewer’s guide complete with lesson plans and activities available for professional development in your school. This may be used for teachers and administrators and all school personnel. It will illuminate the deeper toll that unchecked bullying may have on students. If used properly, the Jamie Nabozny story may help transform a school’s environment into a positive and inclusive experience. This DVD has been endorsed by the National Education Association.

**(4) <http://www.colage.org/> :**



“*COLAGE* is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBT and Q) parent/s.” Their website is devoted to working together with people in order to build a community and work for social justice through multiple means. They utilize, “...youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy.” They define families as ones that are bonded by the love that binds them, not merely families based on law or marriage.

*COLAGE* provides an in-depth look at what it is like to be a child of an LGBT family. There are resources to connect to local *COLAGE* chapters, family stories, publications, resources for people with LGBT (and Q) family, parents who are LGBT, the media, researchers, and partnerships.

This website is an invaluable resource for students of LGBT families who may be feeling the pressure of homophobia in the classroom or outside of the classroom. By providing families and students this resource they will be able to see that you care about their well-being, also that you understand being LGBT is not an anomaly—there are students out there just like them. Normalizing LGBT issues in the classroom will help to bridge the gap between LGBT families and non-LGBT families.

**(5) <http://www.welcomingschools.org/> :**

One of the first pieces of information that rings true from *Welcoming Schools* is this: “Students who experience acceptance [at school] are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school. Also, students in schools with a greater sense of community are more academically motivated and have higher educational aspirations. They are also more likely to

develop social and emotional competencies and enjoy school more.” This type of school environment is one that educators should strive to achieve in their own schools. Students who feel welcome and part of their environment will function better, happier, and even aspire them towards higher academic achievements!

*Welcoming Schools* includes many resources for educators on how to effectively handle homophobia and negative gender reinforcements in the school. They suggest utilizing “gender-expansive” messages that will help students to feel more confident in their own abilities. These gender-expansive messages take a positive spin on gender roles. One other great resource on the Welcoming Schools is a section entitled “Teachable Moments.” These moments include examples of incidences when a student uses derogatory language towards LGBT students in the classroom, or when a student asks what the word “gay” means. Provided on the website are PDF files that include strategies to respond effectively to those remarks.

*Welcoming Schools* includes lesson plans, resources, and plenty of other relevant and useful resources that you as an educator can utilize in the classroom. LGBT issues are discussed on this website, as well as many other diversity issues and resolutions.

**(6) <http://www.glad.org/> :**

*GLAD*, or Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders is a website devoted to the rights of LGBT students in the northeastern part of the United States. However, though the website is specific to that region, there are still a multitude of resources for people outside of that region. This website focuses on the broader issue of LGBT and sexual discrimination at large in society. Included in the website are topics including: Anti-LGBT Discrimination, Transgender Issues,

Hate Crimes & Violence, HIV/AIDS, Parents & Kids, and Students & Schools. This website may be used as a reference for LGBT issues and the progression of legal issues and rights in the northeastern part of the United States. It is important to understand what is happening in other regions of the country in order to stay current on ideas of involving the community, the school, and even administration in creating an atmosphere of tolerance for all.

**(7) <http://lesleakids.com/>**

Author Leslea Newman's website includes books for young kids as well as young adults. Included on her website are: her biography, publications and awards, and books for kids and teens. This website may be a great addition to an author study since Leslea Newman writes about many LGBT issues in her books.

Newman's books are split between, "...picturebooks, middle grade novels, and books for teens." I personally appreciate the fact that Leslea Newman included summaries of her picturebooks, as well as a rationale for writing them. A great reason she gives for writing Mommy, Mama, and Me as well as Daddy, Papa, and Me, is the following, "I wrote these books because I think it is important for kids from all types of families to see themselves portrayed in books. It validates their experience, and teaches all of us that there are many different types of families and the most important thing about a family is that all the people in it love each other."

Her heartfelt message about writing these books is exactly the tone that needs to be set for children who are from LGBT families, or are even LGBT themselves. Providing a natural environment for students to see themselves is a great way to include them in the classroom

without making it uncomfortable or conspicuous. It should feel like a natural part of the curriculum, and Leslea Newman does an excellent job of describing that feeling.

**(8) [www.nancygarden.com](http://www.nancygarden.com)**

Yet another great author's website that can be included in a unit on author study is that of Nancy Garden. Her website includes a list of her books for young children as well as young adults, a section about her, a section about her visits, and a section that discusses her new and in progress books. Nancy Garden has authored many LGBT friendly books, as she herself is a lesbian. She openly shares a picture of her with her partner and about their life together with their animals as well as her homes. Picturebooks by Garden will be a great addition to any classroom library.

**(9) [http://www.susankuklin.com/families\\_57216.htm](http://www.susankuklin.com/families_57216.htm)**

This link is to author Susan Kuklin's website, more specifically the page for her book entitled *Families*. This page allows readers to explore the book in a digital setting. Viewers are able to explore five of the families discussed in the book, including an LGBT family. Beyond this page, one can explore the other areas of the website. Included on the website is a list of books that she has written for young children and young adults, her biography, her blog, as well as a list of appearances. She recently visited Orlando in November 2010! Having the websites of authors handy can have its advantages. Scheduling possible meetings with authors may help bring to life the reality of LGBT people both in the classroom as well as outside.

**(10) <http://www.rainbowrumpus.org/>**

Similar to *COLAGE*, *Rainbow Rumpus* is an online website as well as magazine for children of LGBT parents. This website is quite kid friendly and provides a "...safe, fun, and

empowering place for young people to create and enjoy art, break through isolation, build community, and take action to make the world a better place.” On the front page of the website are pictures of children who belong to *Rainbow Rumpus*. Including these pictures helps students to see themselves in the faces of others.

The section designated for kids includes activities such as coloring pages and printable picture books. Also included in the kids section of the website are short stories that children may read as well as coloring pages with comics on them. These coloring comics center on LGBT issues. These issues are dealt with in a “kid friendly manner.” For example, a common pair of characters seen in these comics are “Rosen’Blue and Sassafras.” One comic I encountered that would be a great classroom resource is entitled “It’s all in the Name!” Two animals, one a Syrian hamster, and the other a lagomorph begin calling each other names such as “rodent!” or “rat!” Though these are not directly discussing explicit LGBT issues, they are touching upon the idea of name-calling and how it may be hurtful to others to use such derogatory language. *Rainbow Rumpus* is an outstanding website for children of LGBT families to find support and even a little humor.

**(11) <http://its.usc.edu/~trimmer/glbtrt/biblist.htm>**

*GLBTRT*, also known as the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table includes an entire arsenal of bibliographies of LGBT issues. One of the sections includes LGBT resources for children. These resources include a long list of elementary level books that include LGBT characters. Another great part of this resource list is that it includes videos and websites to visit as well with LGBT friendly material. *GLBTRT* serves as a great resource for educators who

would like professional development opportunities. This website may be great to share with colleagues as well as to use for developing your own units.

**(12) <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=446>**

From the University of Wisconsin-Madison, this Cooperative Children's Book Center is part of their school of Education. This specific page is dedicated to "Gay and Lesbian Themes and Topics in Selected Childrens and Young Adult Books." This page provides excellent and detailed descriptions of a large list of books for children and young adults. Many books that have not been mentioned in this handbook are included on this website. Having a large amount of literature to choose from is important for many reasons. One important reason is that you as a teacher are responsible for choosing literature that fits your class. No one will know your class better than you do. Rather than choosing between a few books over and over, it will be helpful to have a myriad of substantial resources to choose from.

**(13) <http://www.leewind.org/>**

Lee Wind's blog is a wonderful place for intermediate to middle school LGBT students to come and read about themselves in literature. A disclaimer: on the home page the word "hell" appears. I would suggest this blog be recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders only. Many young adult novels are included on the page with links and descriptive summaries for each book. Some books even have other links on those summary pages taking students to those authors' pages. Lee Wind's blog is one you may want to preview before you recommend it to students only because of the beginning expletive. Beyond that, this blog brings together an enormous amount of resources for young adults. Books provided in this blog are multi-genre and help with the normalization of LGBT characters in books.

**(14) <http://www.transparency.org/> TransParentcy**

This last website is one that I chose to include because of the clear lack of resources for transgender parents. Included in this website are resources about custody issues, resources (such as political, media/education, youth, family, etc.), and connections to various associations around the country. Included associations and websites under the LGBT Media and Education resources is: The Equality Project, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and Women's Educational Media. Women's Educational Media produced the Debra Chasnoff documentary *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*. This website serves as a great portal for resources on LGBT issues, specifically transgender issues.

**(15) Debra Chasnoff - It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School**

**"It's Elementary** takes cameras into classrooms across the U.S. to look at one of today's most controversial issues - whether and how gay issues should be discussed in schools. It features elementary and middle schools where (mainly heterosexual) teachers are challenging the prevailing political climate and its attempt to censor any dialogue in schools about gay people. Rather than focusing on the debate between adults, though, the film takes the point of view of the school children, starting as young as first grade. The results are surprising and, as the LA Reader says, "funny, touching, and fascinating." Third graders' jaws drop when they find out some of their favorite celebrities are gay; second graders react to a book about a girl who gets teased because she has two moms; fourth graders say it makes them "feel weird in your stomach" when other kids yell "faggot" on the playground and teachers don't do anything about it; eighth graders fire a barrage of poignant questions to the gay guest speakers who visit their social studies

class; third graders passionately debate the current events issue of the day: should gays be allowed to get married? It becomes quite clear that most children are affected by anti-gay prejudice in some way, and that they are very responsive to a curriculum that teaches respect for everyone, including lesbians and gay men. Assistant Secretary of Education, Kevin Jennings, says *It's Elementary*, with its refreshing child's eye-view of a topic that sends some adult racing to their school boards, "is the most important film dealing with LGBT issues and safe schools ever made."

I included this synopsis from the website [www.newday.com](http://www.newday.com) because I couldn't have more stated it more perfectly. This film is a crucial professional development tool for educators to experience a scary topic to most adults through the eyes of children. This film illustrates the nature of children and how they are receptive to new ideas and concepts. *It's Elementary* will hopefully incite and inspire educators to attempt similar conversations in their classrooms as the ones held in the film. One can find more information about these types of films at <http://groundspark.org/>.

**(16) Messages from The White House (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/civil-rights/it-gets-better>)**

Even The White House has come out in support of LGBT bullying issues. This web page includes videos from various different White House officials including: President Obama, Vice President Biden, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, OPM Director John Berry, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. These important names in our country coming out and actively supporting LGBT people send an important message—it is not right to bully or discriminate people based on their sexual



orientation or gender identity. They also list an important number at the bottom, the National Suicide Lifeline number: 800-273-TALK (8255).

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Related NGSSS**

In order to find these Sunshine State Standards, I went to the Sunshine State Standards website. The website provides a place for educators to access standards that are required to be taught at each grade level. I explored each subject for grades K-6 and found the ones I felt were most relevant to the topic of including LGBT literature in the classroom. I felt that these standards would be sufficiently covered if LGBT issues in literature or discussions on anti-LGBT bullying were included. You may find more, however, these were the ones that seemed most likely to include natural conversations on LGBT issues.

HE.K.B.2.3 - Identify the appropriate responses to unwanted and threatening situations.

(Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks)

HE.3.B.2.3 - Demonstrate nonviolent strategies to manage or resolve conflict (Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks). Some examples may include conflict resolution, mediation, assertive communication skills.

HE.4.B.2.3 – Demonstrate nonviolent strategies to manage or resolve conflict (Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health

risks). Some examples may include conflict resolution, mediation, assertive communication skills.

SS.K.A.2.1 - Compare children and families of today with those in the past.

SS.1.C.2.3 - Identify ways students can participate in the betterment of their school and community. Some examples may include responsible decision making, classroom jobs, and school service projects.

## **Appendix B: No-Name Calling Lessons (adapted from GLSEN by Mollentze)**

### **We're All Different Alike**

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson is intended to afford students a chance to feel united with their fellow classmates in both their similarities and differences. This lesson will create a space in which students can discuss the reasons why name-calling may happen when individuals or groups are deemed “different,” and how this type of targeting may be turned around into a positive.

#### **Sunshine State Standards:**

HE.K.B.2.3 - Identify the appropriate responses to unwanted and threatening situations.

(Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks)

HE.3.B.2.3 - Demonstrate nonviolent strategies to manage or resolve conflict (Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks). Some examples may include conflict resolution, mediation, assertive communication skills.

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

- To help students identify similarities they have with their classmates they might not have known about.
- To build a sense of unity and excitement around being part of a group of similar classmates.

- To illuminate the difference between names that unify groups of people or similar individuals and names used to point out or deride a group of similar individuals.
- To help students remember and reflect upon times when they felt they were singled out for being different in some way.
- To help build deeper, more understanding relationships with the classmates in sharing a similar experience of being singled out for differences.

**Suggested Grades:** K-5

**Time:** 2-3 Sessions (30-45 minutes each)

**Materials:** *Make A Group Suggested Questions* supplement; paper; pencils; colored-index cards or objects, pre-made; chart paper; markers; clock

**Procedure:**

DAY ONE

Part 1 – Group Game (10-15 minutes)

Tell students the following directions. The game is called *Make A Group*

“This game is about making groups of people based on something you have in common with those people. We are going to clear a space in the room so that everyone can stand up and spread out with room to move. Then I am going to ask you about an answer to a question about yourself. Once you have thought of your answer, I am going to ask you to quickly find other people in the room who have an answer to the question that is the same or similar to

yours. You can ask people their answers, or shout out your own in order to find other people to group with, but the rounds are going to move quickly. If you don't find a group right away, that's ok – you'll find one on the next question. When I raise my hand, it will be time to listen to the next question and make groups.”

Ensure that you've engaged students in as many rounds of the game that will make it relevant to your own classroom. Modifying questions to suit the occasion is appropriate. It is important to keep students moving quickly. In the final round, ask a question that you know will distribute students into even groups and then ask those groups to sit down together and wait for the next part of the lesson.

#### Part 2 – Pass the Brainstorm and Discussion (15-20 minutes)

Once all students are seated from the previous round, announce that they are all part of a group of peers that they share similarities with in some way. Then, state these instructions to them “Each of you will be now be given a piece of paper and a pencil, then when I say “go” you will write down one idea for a positive, Put-up (the opposite of put-down) name for your group. As an example, you may write ‘The Broccoli Busters’ or ‘The Green Team’ as an idea. When I signal you then you will pass your paper to the person on the right of you. Each person will be holding their neighbors paper. Look at what the person before you wrote, and think of a new positive group name, and write it below theirs. Wait for the signal, pass the papers again, and write a third idea. This activity should be done in silence in order to give everyone a chance to think.” Continue until everyone has signed everyone else's papers.

Students should have no more than 30 seconds to write down each idea before the pass. When the brainstorming portion ends allow groups a few minutes to share with each other what they have written down. Tell students they need to choose one name that they will adopt to represent their group positively. Have each group share their name with the class, and then briefly discuss these questions:

- How did it feel to come up with a positive group name with your classmates based on your similarity?
- Why do you think people use names in this way?

Repeat the same instructions to students for the second round of *Pass the Brainstorm*, except this time ask them to think about ideas that someone might use as a Put-down to their group. This round must also take place in silence, and ensure that students understand the Put-down must only be relevant to the context of the activity. After a few passes occur, ask students to pass the papers throughout the group and think about those answers. None of the put-downs will be read out loud during this part of the activity.

Encourage a brief discussion with the class by asking these questions:

- How did it feel to read the list of Put-down group names that your group brainstormed?
- Why do you think people use names this way?
- How did the two rounds of *Pass the Brainstorm* feel different from one another?

## DAY TWO

### Part 3 – Jigsaw (10-15 Minutes)

Begin by handing out color-coded index cards to each student that indicates which group they will now be part of. You can make it so the group has as many groups as suits you, but ensure that the groups only include one or two students in each new group from previous groups.

Once the Jigsaw is complete and everyone is seated with new group, pose the following questions and ask students to engage in discussion in which each student has the opportunity to share an experience with their group.

- Can you remember a time when you were called a name or been put down for being different?
- How did it make you feel?
- How did you respond to it?

Allow groups 2 minutes for each member to share their experiences. Afterwards, ask students to see if they could find any similarities between their classmates' stories. Record answers on the chart paper. The chart paper will be used in the final section of the lesson.

#### Part 4 – Role-plays (20-30 minutes)

Challenge students to use the experiences that were shared that highlighted both the experience of being singled out, and the chart that recorded their similar connections between experiences and come up with a role-play that they will rehearse and share with the class. The role-play should tell the story of someone who was called a name or bullied for being different, how it felt,



and how they dealt with it. The scenario can be a combination of various students' experiences, one student's experience, or completely made up by the group.

In order to facilitate the development of group role-plays, aid students in doling out different jobs that need to be filled in the group that will help to keep them focused on the skit. The role-play does not require everyone to act in it; however, everyone should be part of creating it.

Allow ample preparation for students to rehearse. Use a video camera and record the role-plays. Afterwards, engage students in discussion.

- How did the students being called names in the role-plays deal with being teased?
- What kinds of differences were the students being bullied for in the role-plays?
- Why do you think people call names or put people down for their differences?
- What was it like working in groups today with people that were both similar to and different from you?
- How do our differences help us do good work?

Suggested Literature to begin/supplement the lesson:

- 1) *Asha's Mums* by Rosamund Elwin & Michele Paulse
- 2) *Antonio's Card* by Rigoberto Gonzalez
- 3) *Molly's Family* by Nancy Garden

## Suggested Group Questions

These questions can be modified or completely replaced with a list of questions that suits your class. This is a great place to start:

- What did you have for breakfast (lunch, dinner, etc) today? Make a group with people who had the same thing.
- What is your favorite \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) Make a group with people who have the same favorite.
- How many pets do you have? Make a group with people who have the same number of pets as you do.
- How many people are in your family (living in the same house as you)? Make a group with people who have the same number of people in their family that you do.
- How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_ (name activities)? Make a group with people who feel the same about \_\_\_\_\_ that you do.

## **Appendix C: Identifying Bullying (adapted from Teaching Tolerance by Mollentze)**

### **A Stand Up and Act Contract**

**Lesson Overview:** The mini-unit is designed as a tool for students to acknowledge various aspects of bullying in the school. It will provide students an education on the many forms of bullying, how to identify it, and how to actively stand against it.

#### **Sunshine State Standards:**

#### **Unit Objectives:**

- Students will understand there are four types of bullying: verbal, physical, social, and intimidation.
- Students will understand that there is a progression to bullying, and that it must be stopped at the first incidence.
- Students will be able to talk about and respond to bullying when presented in literature. They will be able to discuss what they saw, heard, felt, and experienced as the literature was being presented to them.
- Students will be able to work together in order to form a classroom contract complete with consequences of bullying, as well as ideas about how to support one another when they encounter bullying.

**Suggested Grades:** K-6<sup>th</sup>

**Time:** 45-60 minutes. Note: Time may vary depending on how many books you decide to use.

**Materials:** Butcher paper, markers, books with bullies (suggested list at end of lesson), “Bullies in Books” handout

**Procedure:**

Part 1

Introduce students to the idea that bullying comes in more than just one form. In fact, there are four types of bullying: physical, verbal, social, and intimidation. Explain to students that physical bullying will result in visible signs on a person’s body, verbal may be heard, social bullying is heard from by others, and intimidation may include body language such as a nasty look, a gesture, or even a comment. Also remind students that all those types of bullying may overlap.

Divide students into four different groups. Hand out butcher paper to each group. Give each group a type of bullying. Explain that they are to write the type of bullying at the top of the paper and then brainstorm a list of what that type of bullying what look like, feel like, and sound like. Afterwards, students will present it to the class in groups.

It may be difficult to get students to understand what social bullying and intimidation bullying may look like, feel like, and sound like. Facilitating the conversation is a key element of the lesson. Your class will be a unique environment—ensure the discussion addresses the environment of your classroom. Ask students these follow-up questions in

order to bring an element of closure as well as some important points to muse after the activity.

- 1) Which type of bullying leaves the most permanent scar?
- 2) Think of a time when you felt bullied by someone. How did you respond to the bullying?
- 3) Think of a time when you saw a peer being bullied. How did you respond to the bullying?
- 4) What types of clues will help you identify if a friend or peer is being bullied?

## Part 2

Choose two or three books from the list of books provided. Tell them that they are now going to listen to these stories and fill out the “Bullies in Books” worksheet. You may use as few or as many books as you’d like. This may also turn into a weekly or monthly activity in order to refresh students’ memories and remind them that bullying is an on-going concern that needs to be addressed.

# Bullies in Books



Title of Book

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- 1) Who is the victim? Or victims?

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2) Who is the bully? Or bullies? \_\_\_\_\_

3) What type of bullying was it? \_\_\_\_\_

4) What harm came from the bullying?

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5) What would you have done to help the victim?

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6) What would you have done to help the bully understand what they've done?

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### Part 3

The final step in this process is to initiate a class discussion. Guide the students in brainstorming various class consequences of bullying. The consequences should be authentic and provide tangible effects both for the bully and the classroom. Ensure that all students agree upon these consequences. Post these rules in a visible place in the classroom. After these rules are posted, students will be asked to sign a contract stating that they will be positive peers and classmates. They will stand up for peers who are being bullied as well as follow the rules set forth in regards to bullying consequences.



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