

Opening Doors:

Lesbian and Gay Parents and Schools



A Project of the Educational Advocacy Committee
of the
Family Pride Coalition

Thank you for having the courage to open the door and cross the threshold. By shedding light on what exists on both sides of the door, this booklet nurtures greater understanding and appreciation of what is possible once we've all entered the same side. Through your willingness to venture into new territory, you are becoming part of one community...the learning community... for all of us and for the sake of all of our children.

Margie Brickley
Hilary Marsh

Aimee Gelnaw
Daniel Ryan

Graphic Design: Terry Santoro

Page Layout: David Schaefer and Steven J. McIntosh



Opening Doors:

Lesbian & Gay Parents and Schools*

Gay and lesbian parents... what do they want for their children in school?

Educators...** what do they need to know to best serve children who are growing up in gay- or lesbian-headed families?

Children... what do they need for a safe, supportive learning environment?

Parents want what's best for their children. Educators and school administrators seek to balance the needs of a group of children and their families. Children need a safe, supportive atmosphere in which they can learn. Ultimately, we all want the same thing.

Making schools a safe place for all children is complex and has far reaching implications. Now is the right time to consider the issues of gay- and lesbian-headed families, as many school systems are beginning to examine their policies and officially declare that they will not tolerate discrimination.

Bias hurts. It hurts children, it hurts families and it hurts entire school communities. How do we create a community of openness and trust rather than hostility and suspicion, of shared efforts rather than cross purposes, of growth through knowledge rather than closed-mouth steadfastness?

The first step to creating such a community is to commit to doing so.

* "Schools" refers to any program for children (child care, preschools, Head Start, nursery schools, family child care homes, before and after school programs, public schools and private schools).

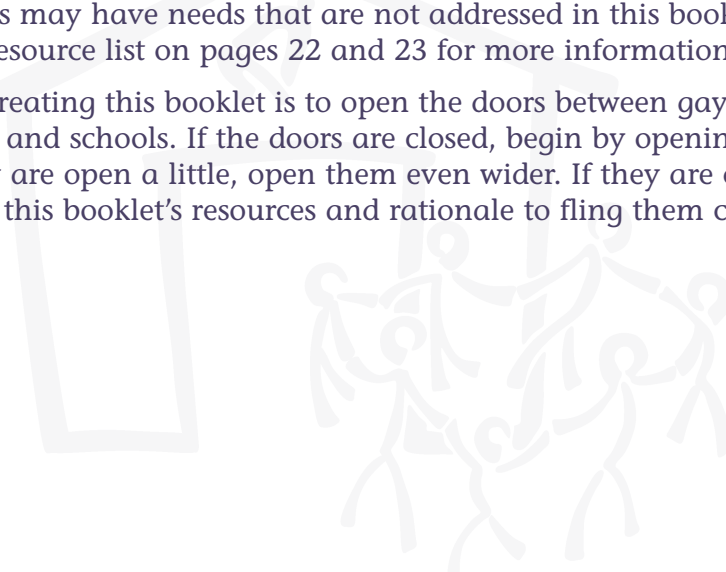
** "Educators" refers to all people who work with young children (teachers, caregivers, family child care providers, assistant teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, specialists and all other school personnel).



In this booklet you will find a set of facts, fictions and fears that shape the thinking about lesbian- and gay-headed families in this country. This is followed by information for parents and for educators; the voices of children inform each of us about their daily experiences in schools and serve as a backdrop for why educators and parents need to participate in this dialogue. The booklet concludes with a set of rights and responsibilities to serve as a guide for all members of the learning community.

Everyone involved in this process has questions. This booklet addresses some of the most frequently asked. *Opening Doors* draws from research largely about lesbian and gay parents. The issues and suggestions explored within this book may apply to bisexual or transgendered parents. However, these families may have needs that are not addressed in this booklet. Please consult the resource list on pages 22 and 23 for more information.

The aim in creating this booklet is to open the doors between gay and lesbian parents and schools. If the doors are closed, begin by opening them a crack. If they are open a little, open them even wider. If they are open halfway, use this booklet's resources and rationale to fling them completely open.





“I’m just a kid with parents”

Zack, 11 years old



In this booklet you will find:

Facts/Fictions/Fears

For and About Gay and Lesbian-Headed Families p.2

Parents

How Lesbian and Gay Parents Can Help With
Their Children’s Education p.6

Educators

How Educators Can Help Children
in Gay- and Lesbian-Headed Families p.9

Children’s Voices

Stories Kids Tell Us About What Happens at School p.12

Questions and Answers

Questions for Educators to Ask Parents p.15

Answers to Questions Children May Ask

Nonjudgemental Ways to Answer Children’s Questions p.16

Rights and Responsibilities...

of Children, Lesbian and Gay Parents and Educators p.17

Glossary of Terms. p.19

Resources for Families and Educators. p.22

About the Authors p.24



Facts/Fictions/Fears

For and About Lesbian- and Gay-Headed Families

FACTS

- The recent Federal Goals 2000 legislation sets home-school partnership as a national goal.
- When there is a positive relationship between families and schools, students perform better academically and socially (Pyszkowski, 1987).¹
- The American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, and the National Association of Social Workers all have published statements declaring that homosexuality is not a disease.
- The American Federation of Teachers, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association and the National Education Association all have anti-discrimination statements that include sexual orientation.
- It is estimated that there are 2 to 7 million children being raised by gay or lesbian parents in the United States (Patterson, 1998).²
- In 1998 national attention focused on the state of New Jersey when policy changes allowed gay men and lesbians and unmarried heterosexual couples to adopt following the routine procedures available to heterosexual couples.
- It is illegal for gay men and lesbians to adopt children in the states of Florida and New Hampshire.
- Co-parent (or second-parent) adoptions, essential to the protection of families of lesbian and gay parents, are granted by policy in a small number of states. In an overwhelming majority of states, co-parent adoptions are not attainable as a result of discriminatory state policy. Such co-parent adoptions are essential to the protection of families, particularly in the event of death or disability. Numerous states have current bills pending to create prohibitions for such adoptions.

- To date lesbians and gay men are denied equal rights to marriage in a civil ceremony and are therefore denied the same recognition and protections as other parents.
- Courts deny custody to lesbian or gay parents citing their sexual orientation alone as the deciding factor. In a society where homosexuals are viewed first and foremost in terms of their sexuality rather than their selves and abilities, homophobia and heterosexism are primary forces in thinking about children with gay parents (Casper, Schultz & Wickens, 1992).³
- In most of the United States, people can be fired from their jobs or denied housing based solely on the fact that they are gay or lesbian.
- A nationwide survey found that the form of harassment schoolchildren fear most is anti-gay harassment, e.g., being called “faggot,” “sissy” and other homophobic epithets (The American Association of University Women, 1993).⁴
- In 1996, recent high school graduate, Jamie Nabozny, won a \$900,000 lawsuit in which his Ashland, Wisconsin high school was held liable for the antigay violence in their school.

FICTIONS

- MYTH: Children being raised by gay or lesbian parents are more likely to become gay or lesbian. [While it shouldn't matter whether a child becomes lesbian or gay, this myth is used to justify harassment, hate and discrimination.]
- MYTH: Lesbians and gay men recruit children into homosexual lifestyles.
- MYTH: Lesbians and gay men are asking for "special rights."

FEARS

For the lesbian or gay parent:

- My child will be discriminated against.
- My child will not be invited to friends' homes. Friends will not accept my child's invitations to come to our home.
- The school won't provide opportunities for my child to see his or her family reflected in the curriculum.
- The school will "out" me and I will risk losing my job.
- The school will "out" me and I will risk losing custody of my children.

For the teacher/school:

- Addressing issues about lesbian- or gay-headed families means that I will have to talk about sex in the classroom.
- I am uncomfortable using the words "gay" and "lesbian."
- I don't know what words to use when interacting with members of lesbian- and gay-headed families.
- I don't know how to reconcile my personal beliefs with my responsibility to all the children and families in my classroom/school.

- I don't know what resources on gay- and lesbian-headed families exist, or where to find them.
- If I am inclusive, I could be accused of promoting homosexuality and lose my job.

For the child:

- Teachers and kids will think I am strange.
- Teachers and kids will treat me unfairly.
- My family and I will be called names.
- My family will not be included like other families in the school.
- My friends' parents might not let their kids come over to my house to play or for a sleepover.
- Teachers and kids might think I will be lesbian or gay.

For the larger school community:

- My child will be taught values with which I disagree.
- My child will be influenced to be gay.
- My son will become a "sissy."/My daughter will become a "tomboy."
- The "traditional" family will be devalued.

References:

1. Pyszkowski, C.J. (1992) Children of lesbian and gay parents. *Child Development*, 63, 1021-1042.
2. Patterson, Charlotte, (1998) unpublished manuscript.
3. Casper, V., Schultz, S., & Wickins, E. (1992). Breaking the silences: Lesbian and gay parents and the schools. *Teachers College Record*, 94, 109-135.
4. American Association of University Women. (1993) "Hostile Hallways" Survey on Sexual Harassment in the Schools.

Parents

How Gay and Lesbian Parents Can Help With Their Children's Education

Your child's school or child care program may have never encountered a family like yours and may not know that you exist, what you need, what to call you or how to treat you and your children. And, most important, they may not be aware that the curriculum excludes you. Individuals at the school may have personal views that are not compatible with your life, but it is their job to provide your child with a nurturing environment for learning.

Parents are advocates for their children. As gay and lesbian parents, it is primarily up to you, in partnership with the school personnel, to ensure that your children's school and/or childcare program is or becomes a safe and supportive place for your children and your family.

Children deserve to see their families portrayed in the course of their everyday life throughout the school year. Make sure lesbian- and gay-headed families are included along with the spectrum of families in pictures on the wall and in books in the classroom and school library.

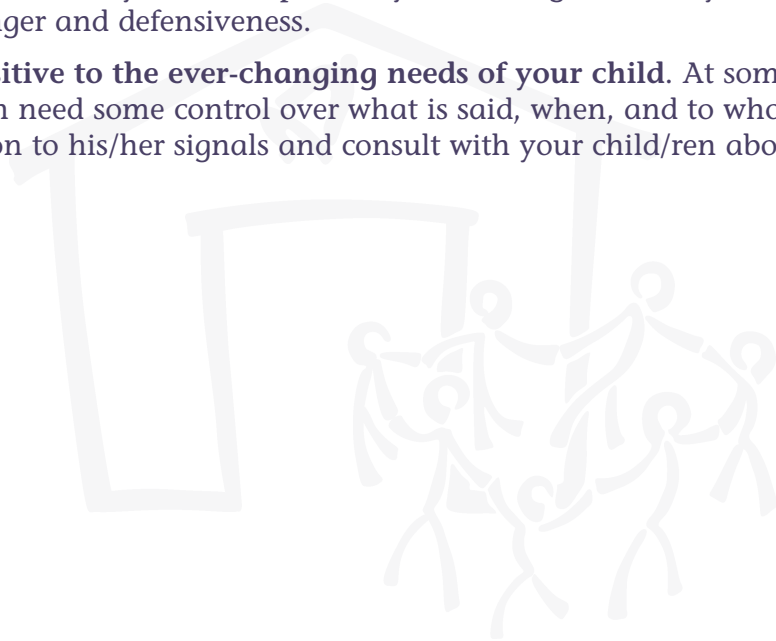
Children need teachers to use language that is inclusive of all families—especially theirs. Early in the school year, request that the first and last names of all the members of your family be reflected accurately in school communications—directories, newsletters, notes, etc. Let the school know, in advance, how you would like them to handle potentially awkward situations such as Mother's Day or Father's Day card making, father-daughter dances or brunches.

Your children deserve to be and feel safe at school. Talk to your children and see if children are teasing one another. If they are, approach the teachers and school administrators. Teasing is often the result of ignorance, not true hatred. School wide education by adults and children is the best way to put an end to it—or stop it from developing.

Here are more things you can do:

- **Determine your level of comfort in being open.** For a variety of reasons including custody issues, job security and personal safety, you may choose to be less open. Become as empowered and informed as you can so that when an opportunity arises you will be prepared to take a step.
- **Be as open as possible about your relationship.** School personnel cannot be supportive about family situations about which they have no knowledge. If you choose to label the other same-sex adult as an “aunt,” “roommate,” etc., the school does not know there are gay- and lesbian-headed families in the school or community, and they may see no reason to incorporate any information about them into the curriculum.
- **Find a way to contribute to your children’s school community.** The single best way to become accepted in a school community is to be a presence. Devote as much time as you can spare—at least a few hours over the course of the school year—to PTA meetings, committees, classrooms, trips, tutoring or potlucks. Let people get to know you and your children as individuals. Don’t be limited/reduced to labels and group identity.
- **Provide your children’s school with appropriate language and resources.** Tell the teachers who is in your family and the names your children use to identify them, and provide a glossary of correct terms for lesbian and gay families. Give the library a list of books, videos and other resource materials (see resource page), and encourage school administrators and librarians to purchase these materials for the school.
- **Seek to create support from other gay and lesbian parents and/or organizations.** You may find that you are not the only gay/lesbian parent(s) in the school or in the area. You may believe you are, but if your relationship is hidden, the same may be true for others. We are everywhere. To get a list of local organizations and family activities, contact Family Pride Coalition (formerly Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International. See resource listing.)

- **Advocate for your child, but do so in a manner that respects the world of the school personnel.** Schools have hundreds of children to educate, ever-shrinking budgets to juggle and people's careers to manage. Most schools want to accommodate all children and all families in the best way possible, but please keep in mind that your child's needs are not the school's only concern. Also remember that ignorance does not necessarily equal homophobia; just because a school hasn't addressed lesbian and gay family issues doesn't mean it won't address them if asked to. If you approach a school with patience, confidence and information, it is much more likely to be receptive to your messages than if you charge in with anger and defensiveness.
- **Be sensitive to the ever-changing needs of your child.** At some point children need some control over what is said, when, and to whom. Pay attention to his/her signals and consult with your child/ren about these issues.



Educators

How Educators Can Help Children in Gay- and Lesbian-Headed Families

Conservative estimates state there are between 2 and 7 million children in the United States who are being raised in lesbian- or gay-headed families. These children attend our schools. Gay and lesbian parents, like other parents, are seeking partnerships with schools to support their children's academic, social and emotional growth. Educators and lesbian and gay parents are learning how to interact with each other. At the same time, we need much more understanding of the experiences of gay- and lesbian-headed families to form home-school partnerships that support all children.

You may never have knowingly encountered a lesbian- or gay-headed family. There may be two moms, two dads, a single lesbian or gay parent or a blended family. While the family constellation may be new, your role as an educator does not change and includes addressing the children's academic, social and emotional needs in partnership with parents.

Research has shown that student success in school is related to the level of positive interaction between home and school. Your role is to provide each child with equal educational opportunities. To do this it is necessary to create an environment that reflects all family constellations, whether there are children from gay- or lesbian-headed families or not. Just as you strive to have children understand people of all cultures, you must provide a way for children to see the many kinds of families that exist. If your personal views conflict with the family constellation, it is your job to put aside those views in order to fully address the child's needs.

All children need to feel safe in school. Ignoring harassment gives children permission to continue it. Just as you must stop comments that have derogatory racist connotations, you must also stop teasing that is based upon sexual orientation. Help children to recognize that words like "gay," "dyke," "faggot" and "queer" can be hurtful and will not be tolerated.

Here are some specific things that you can do:

- *Use appropriate language in acknowledging the parent(s) in a gay- or lesbian-headed family.*

In order to foster a positive relationship with lesbian or gay parents, use terms they choose. Be proactive, and ask the parent(s) what names their child uses for them such as Mama Kate, Mommy, Papa, Daddy. Find out about what other family members their child might refer to in class.

- *Update your curriculum to include materials that address the issues of gay- and lesbian-headed families.*

There are antibias curricula available and other resources that model inclusiveness. Like all children, those in gay- or lesbian-headed families need to see their family reflected in the classroom curriculum. Ask the parents if they have any books or resources that would be useful. Ask the school curriculum coordinator or resource center director to get materials that include lesbian- and gay-headed families. Include conversation about gay- and lesbian-headed families in the classroom. Discussion of lesbian- or gay-headed families is no more a discussion about sex than talking about heterosexual families would be.

- *See that you and your colleagues get training on the topic of lesbian- and gay-headed families.*

Through training, you can address whatever questions you may have and become informed about the issues that confront gay- or lesbian-headed families. We recommend that you invite lesbian or gay parents to share their experiences with school faculty. Training creates a forum for shared discourse in which you may work through stereotypes or misconceptions. Get the videotapes *It's Elementary* or *Both of My Moms' Names Are Judy* (see resource list). There is a need for a safe place in which you can work through your personal feelings so you can support the children of all families in your school.

- *Change your school forms and other community documents to use neutral, inclusive language.*

Many school forms ask for “mother” and “father,” and directory listing forms often contain such noninclusive references as “room mother.” Change the wording of forms from “mother” and “father” to “parent/guardian.” Include several “parent/guardian” lines to accommodate blended families. Make sure you list all parents’ names in the school directory (with their permission, of course). Include lesbian and/or gay parents in class newsletters that announce family celebrations such as births, adoptions and second-parent adoptions.

- *Work on creating a school environment that is inclusive of all community members.*

See that your school/district/state nondiscrimination policy includes sexual orientation. Make sure gay- and lesbian-headed families and colleagues are free from harassment or any kind of discrimination in your school. Use the words “lesbian” and “gay” in the school so that all community members gain familiarity with these words and the existence of gay- and lesbian-headed families. Provide a nurturing environment for parents and school faculty and staff to address questions or concerns without fear of retribution.

- *Make sure your school leadership models inclusiveness and an understanding of the needs of lesbian- and gay-headed families.*

School leadership plays a strong role in setting the stage for inclusiveness. Ask school leaders to demonstrate their acceptance of gay- and lesbian-headed families. Learn to use the words “gay” and “lesbian” in public forums. School leaders need to acknowledge to the entire community that inclusion of lesbian- and gay-headed families in the curriculum does not mean a discussion about sex. When leaders and all educators begin using the words “gay” and “lesbian” and to include lesbian- and gay-headed families in their policy statements and other community documents, educators will be more open to addressing such issues in the classroom.

Children's Voices

Stories kids tell us about what happens at school

7-year-old child: *"Your mom's a lesbian."*

6-year-old child: *"Yeah, she is."*

For children of lesbian- or gay-headed families, the labels used by their families are a matter of fact. They do not assign negative interpretations to the terms lesbian and gay. Many are used to hearing the words and respond to them comfortably. Teachers and school personnel might respond in a similar manner and not assume that the words are being used to insult. This takes the power away from the child who may be using the words with a negative connotation.

8-year-old child: *"A mom and a dad! A mom and a dad! Why is it always a mom and a dad?"*

Children need to see their families reflected in materials throughout the educational environment and they need to hear about families like theirs. Children pay close attention to who is represented and who is not. Visibility or invisibility establishes which groups are powerful and which are marginalized.

10 year old child: *"No one talks about that kind of stuff in my class."*

Silence is as powerful as what is said—or more. If children do not feel welcome to talk about their families at school, they are forced to leave a significant part of their lives behind when they enter the school or child care setting. This can have a negative impact on their self-esteem. When children do not feel comfortable in the school environment, their learning and development can be negatively affected.

9-year-old child: *“I know being gay is not bad but other kids don’t even know what it means. They just think it’s bad.”*

10-year-old child: *“When people use gay as an insult, it’s like they are hurting my family.”*

All homophobic remarks feel like personal attacks to the children of gay- and lesbian-headed families. Parents are the most important people in the lives of children and anti-gay slurs can have a profound and devastating effect on children whose parents are gay. If words like “gay,” “faggot,” “lezzie” and “dyke” are used as insults, then homophobia is seen as being an acceptable bias.

9-year-old girl: *“Today, in the hallway, Emily and I had our arms around each other and Michael called us gay. He meant gay in a bad way. My teacher told him that she would not let him hurt anyone’s feelings. She told him she thought it was great when friends love each other enough to hug each other.”*

Teachers hold much power in the worlds of children and schools. A supportive response to a difficult situation sends a clear message that the teacher is in control, will not tolerate harassment, and supports all children.

10-year-old boy: *“Everyone calls Charles ‘gayboy’ and I’m afraid if I tell them to stop they will call me ‘gayboy’ too. The teachers don’t even say anything.”*

When one child is harassed all children in the group are negatively affected. No one wants to be singled out as the object of abuse. When teachers keep the children safe emotionally as well as physically, they are partners in creating a healthy learning environment.

11-year-old child: *“I’m just a kid with parents.”*

12-year-old child: *“I don’t want to talk about it.”*

Some children with one or more lesbian or gay parents do not view their families as “different” or “deficient.” Children encounter negative images in the world outside their family. For these children, like all children, their families are just their families. As a result of homophobia, other children with gay or lesbian parents are made painfully aware of the differences and the possible physical, social and emotional dangers of disclosing that they have one or more lesbian or gay parents. Because they are sensitive to and fearful of the repercussions, they may choose to never talk about their families within the school community. Adults need to respect these feelings.



Questions and Answers

Questions for Educators to Ask Parents

Tell me about your family. Who would you like us to include in discussions about your family? *(Asking open-ended questions like this invites parents to speak freely and openly.)*

What are the names your child uses to refer to your family members? *(Daddy/Papa, Mama Jane/Mama Sally, first names, etc.)*

How open are you about your relationship with the rest of the community? *(For some families, public disclosure may result in discrimination, harassment and danger of losing custody and/or jobs.)*

Do you have resources and materials that might help me learn about this issue and cover it in class?

How does your family explain how your children came to be with you? *(Families can be created by birth, adoption, surrogacy or from previous heterosexual marriage.)*

Questions for Parents to Ask Educators

Do you have an anti-discrimination policy in your school that includes sexual orientation? How is this policy communicated to staff, parents and students?

How does your school deal with issues of teasing, name-calling and social and/or emotional harassment?

Have you ever had openly gay or lesbian parents or teachers at your school? If you have, how did your school address their needs?

Has the school provided training and/or workshops about issues of bias or discrimination, including families with one or more lesbian or gay parents?

Does your school have books or other resource materials that reflect lesbian- or gay-headed families and explore the issues related to them?

Answers to Questions Children May Ask

Nonjudgmental ways to answer children's questions

These can be adjusted to accommodate your family's values and/or the developmental level and personal experiences of your child/ren.

What does "gay" or "lesbian" mean? Being gay means that a person loves, in a very special way, someone who is the same gender. Gay men love other gay men. Gay women, or lesbians, love other lesbians. Gay people might choose to have a special relationship with someone and share their home and have a family together.

How can John have two dads? Families are made up in many different ways. John lives in a family where there are two dads because his parents, like yours, love each other very much and wanted to bring a child into their family to be part of their lives.

Where is John's mom? His family is made up of two dads, John, and any siblings. A woman gave birth to John. His dads are the ones who make a home for him and take care of him.

Can girls marry girls or boys marry boys? Grown-ups create relationships in many ways. Many grown-ups live their lives in couples and take care of one another as a family. Being married is one way to do this. In most places, women cannot marry women and men cannot marry men because there is no law that says they can. But people who love each other can live together, take care of one another and be a family, with or without children.

Is Caitlin going to be gay because her moms are gay (lesbian)? No. Caitlin will grow up to be who she was born to be. Having lesbian or gay parents does not make a child become gay or lesbian.

Will I be gay if I play with Caitlin? No. You are always going to be who you are, no matter whom you play with. Being gay, lesbian or straight is something that's inside a person; no one else can put it there.

Rights and Responsibilities

of children, lesbian and gay parents and educators

Rights

Parents have the right to advocate for their children.

Parents have the right to have open and honest communication with schools.

Parents have the right to have their family recognized, acknowledged and included in the school community.

An educator has the right to have a personal view about homosexuality.

Educators have the right to feel safe about talking about lesbian and gay issues in school.

Educators clearly benefit from knowing any information about children's lives outside school that may affect their lives inside school.

Responsibilities

Educators have the responsibility to consider parental concerns as essential to children's educational process.

Educators have the responsibility to provide opportunities for parents to establish a dialogue with them.

Educators have the responsibility to use language that is inclusive on forms, newsletters and other school communications.

The educator has the responsibility to continually seek the tools to afford all children and families the same degree of respect.

Schools have the responsibility to institute a written anti-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation.

Parents have the responsibility to keep educators informed about issues that may affect their children's academic, social and emotional development.

Children have the right to a safe and harassment-free school environment.

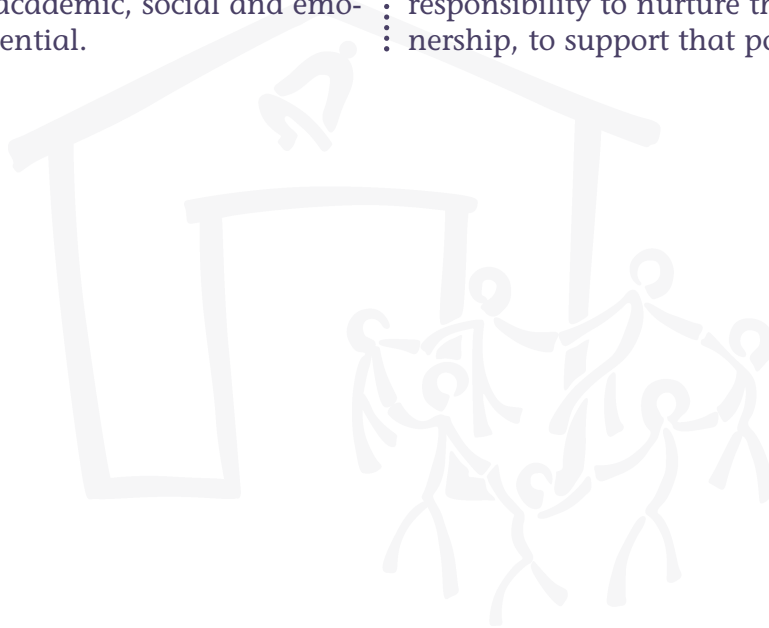
Children have the right to have their family reflected in the school curriculum.

Children have the right to reach their full academic, social and emotional potential.

• Educators have the responsibility to stop name-calling, discrimination and emotional and physical abuse.

• Educators have the responsibility to include pictures, books and conversations about lesbian- and gay-headed families in depictions of general family life.

• Parents and educators have the responsibility to nurture their partnership, to support that potential.



Glossary of Terms

anti-discrimination policy—a policy that states clearly that bias or discrimination against a particular group—in this case, lesbian/gay people and their children—will not be tolerated. This discrimination includes both actions and words.

bias—having thoughts, feelings or displaying behaviors that assume who people that are different than your own ideas or beliefs are less worthy of equal rights and treatment.

bisexual—a person who is attracted to people of either gender.

blended families—families created by the coming together of adults when one or more of the adults has children to become one new family.

co-parent adoption—(see second-parent adoption)

custody—the legal guardianship of a child. In the gay and lesbian community, custody is determined through biological connection and legal adoption. Many nonbiological parents and parents not initially named in adoption papers choose to gain legal custody of their children through a process of second-parent adoption.

dyke—derogatory term used to describe a lesbian, most often one who does not display traditionally feminine characteristics. This term, when used outside of the gay/lesbian community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term.

faggot—derogatory term used to describe a gay man, most often one who does not display traditionally masculine characteristics. This term, when used outside of the gay/lesbian community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term.

gay —1) the generic term used to describe the lesbian/gay community.
—2) more specifically, a man who is homosexual.
—3) a slur used to describe anything, anyone or any behavior that does not meet the approval of a given group.

harassment—behavior meant to frighten, taunt or defame someone. Harassment can be either physical, verbal or emotional in nature. All forms are destructive and have personal consequences for the victims.

heterosexism—the (usually implicit) assumption that heterosexuality is a norm, a standard, an ideal, preferable to other sexual orientations, or the only option.

homophobia—the fear of homosexuality and homosexuals. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of gay and lesbian people.

lesbian—a homosexual woman.

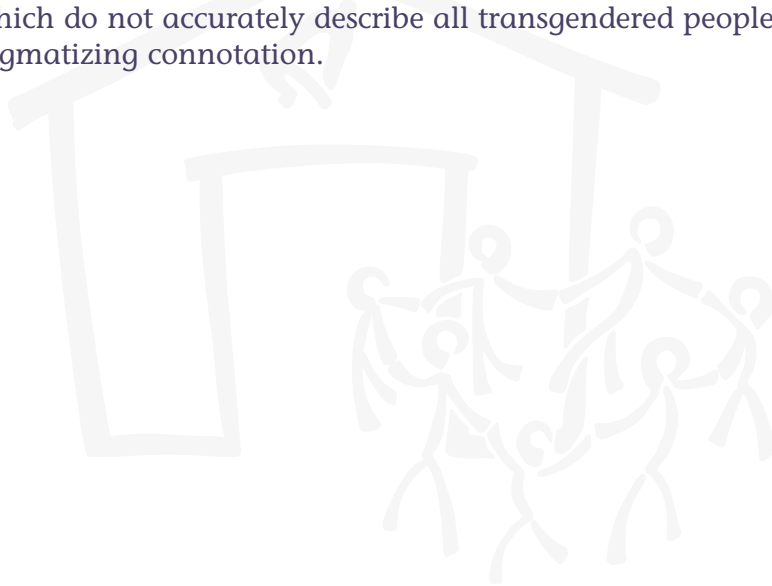
“out”—a term used to describe a lesbian or gay person who is open about his or her sexual identity. This term comes from the expression “out of the closet,” which means not hiding one’s preference for persons of the same sex. Individuals, for personal reasons or perceptions of safety and acceptance, may choose to be out in some situations and not in others. It is a matter of each individual’s personal choice.

“outing”—revealing the sexual identity of another person usually without his or her consent.

second-parent adoption—the legal process through which a nonbiological or nonadoptive parent (in the original adoption procedure) gains shared legal custody of a child of a lesbian/gay couple. This can be in the case where one lesbian partner in a couple is the biological mother; one gay man in a couple is a surrogate father, or where one gay man or lesbian partner is named in the initial adoption of a child and the other partner gains legal custody in a separate adoption proceeding. Second-parent adoption is not permitted in all states or, even within states, in every county. It is determined in a family court and is a costly procedure requiring a home study by a social service agency and an attorney to advocate on behalf of the family. In most states (except New Jersey and Massachusetts), state policy does not allow two partners in a lesbian or gay couple to be named in the initial adoption of a child (same as co-parent adoption).

special rights—a term used to describe the assumption that accommodations made to include or protect the rights of people outside the mainstream (and for whom there are no constitutional laws to protect) are special and therefore, not necessary. This term is often used by conservative or religious groups to exclude certain groups from seeking equal protections. In almost all cases, the disenfranchised groups are seeking equal rights, or the same protections of safety, liberty and justice that are the birthright of all other citizens.

transgendered—a person whose gender identity, expression or behaviors are not traditionally associated with their birth sex. This term is preferred by many transgendered people over the clinical terms transvestite or transsexual, which do not accurately describe all transgendered people and also have a stigmatizing connotation.



Resources for Families and Educators

Family Pride Coalition

P.O. Box 65327
Washington, DC 20035-5327
Ph: (202) 331-5015
Fax: (202) 331-0080
E-mail: info@familypride.org
www.familypride.org

Also available:

Opening More Doors:
Creating Policy Change to
Include Our Families

Bisexual Resource Center

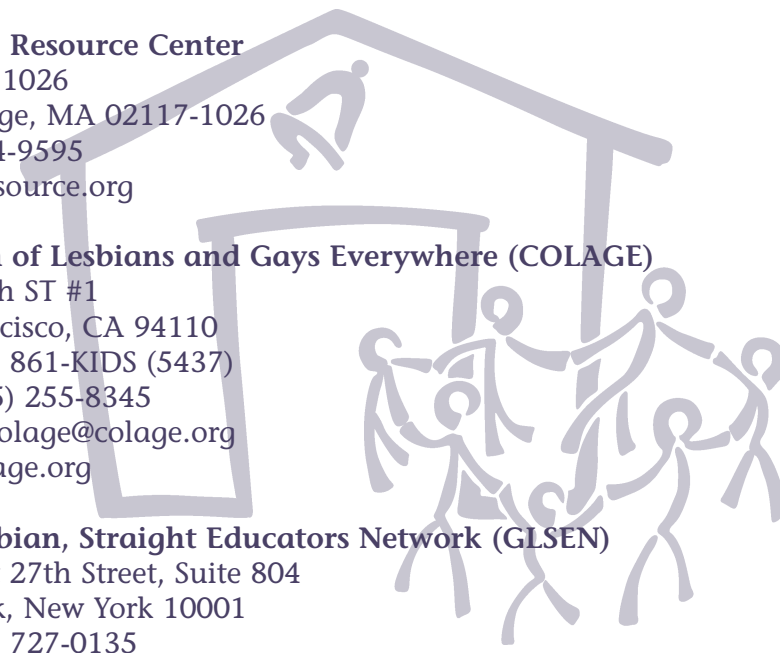
P.O. Box 1026
Cambridge, MA 02117-1026
(617) 424-9595
brc@biresource.org

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

3543 18th ST #1
San Francisco, CA 94110
Ph: (415) 861-KIDS (5437)
Fax: (415) 255-8345
E-mail: colage@colage.org
www.colage.org

Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN)

121 West 27th Street, Suite 804
New York, New York 10001
Ph: (212) 727-0135
E-mail: glsen@glsen.org
www.glsen.org



Lesbian and Gay Parents Association of San Francisco (LGPA)

260 Tingley Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
Phone Number: (415) 337-1629
E-mail: lgpasf@aol.com

“Both My Moms Names are Judy”

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Ph: (202) 467-8180
Fax: (202) 467-8194
E-mail: info@pflag.org
www.pflag.org

Straight Spouse Network

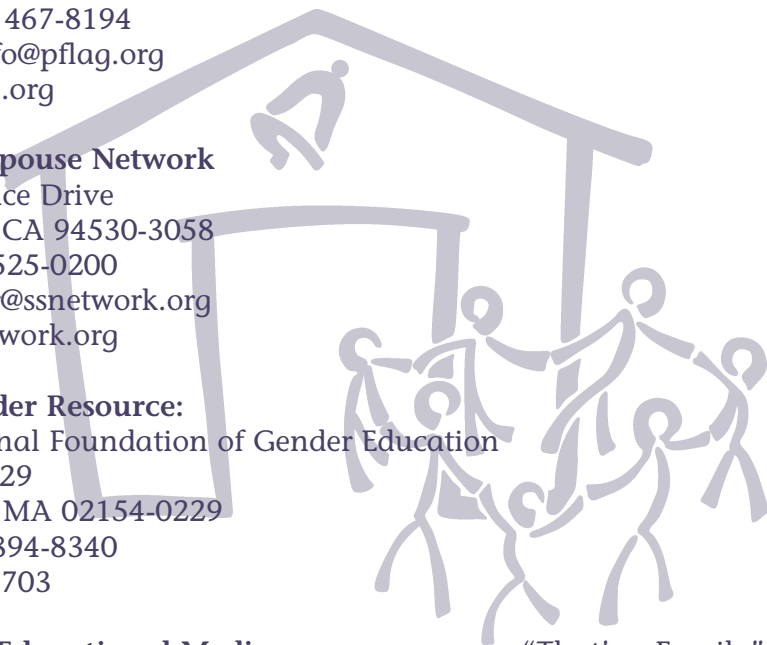
8215 Terrace Drive
El Cerrito, CA 94530-3058
Ph: (510) 525-0200
E-mail: dir@ssnetwork.org
www.ssnetwork.org

Transgender Resource:

International Foundation of Gender Education
P.O. Box 229
Waltham, MA 02154-0229
Ph: (617) 894-8340
Fax: 899-5703

Women’s Educational Media

2180 Bryant Street, #203
San Francisco, CA 94110
Ph: (415) 641-4616
Kids Speak Up About Bullying”
Fax: (415) 641-4632
E-mail: wemfilms@womedia.org
www.womedia.org



“That’s a Family”
“It’s Elementary”
“Let’s Get Real:
a Documentary Where

About the Authors

Aimee Gelnaw, the executive director of the Family Pride Coalition, utilizes her extensive background in child and family development to educate and train school professionals about issues facing LGBT parents and their children in schools. For 15 years, she has been involved with local and national LGBT parenting groups, in addition to her professional work in child care, school settings and teaching early childhood development at the college level. As the mother of two children, Gelnaw integrates her professional and personal experiences in her ongoing pursuit of safe, welcoming and just schools for all families. She has authored and co-authored several LGBT parenting resources including “Talking to Children About Our Families,” “Talking to Children About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” and “The Essential Outsider: Life as the Non-Bio Mom” for the *Homefronts* anthology.

Margie Brickley, an early childhood educator and parent of two children, has spent 14 years advocating for and educating about LGBT-headed families. She has led seminars and workshops all over the country, taught college course on diversity, and worked with schools and child care centers to develop and implement policies that welcome all children and families. Brickley is the co-author of “Talking to Children About Our Families” and “Talking to Children About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.” A writer and performer of inclusive children’s music, she is also a member of the LGBT Interest Forum of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Hilary Marsh, the mother of two high-schoolers, has been an active member of school communities for more than ten years. A professional writer and website consultant, she has published articles on lesbian and gay parenting for local and national publications, as well as informally educating teachers and parents about what it means to be a lesbian parent in a primarily straight school environment. She is also the director of public relations and communications for GLSEN-Chicago (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network).

Daniel Ryan is a stay-at-home dad and currently works as an educational consultant with Chicago area families and schools. He recently worked as an Assistant Dean of the College of Education at National-Louis University in Evanston, Ill. Ryan served for six years as an elementary/middle school principal, and previously taught grades 1-6 in both urban and suburban school settings. He received his doctorate from the Teachers College at Columbia University, where he focused his research on lesbian- and gay-headed families and school personnel. Ryan continues to educate on this topic and assists schools in their work with gay/lesbian families. He and his partner have a nine-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son.





Love Makes a Family

© 1999 Educational Advocacy Committee of the Family Pride Coalition

to obtain copies please contact us at:

P.O. Box 65327, Washington, DC 20035-5327 • (202) 331-5015 • Fax (202) 331-0080
info@FamilyPride.org • <http://www.familypride.org>