

Back to School:

Building Family Equality in Every Classroom

Between 4-14 million children with LGBT parents are heading back to school this month.

- 1 What's happening in our schools
- 2 Concrete steps you can take to make your school a safe and welcoming space for everyone to learn and grow
- 3 How Family Pride can help you support your children and youth

Difference and curiosity are normal. Hate and intolerance are learned behaviors. Love and hate are both four-letter words. Which do you want to teach your children?

visibility + education - misinformation = value and respect

Bullying

The problem is not and never has been that our children might be bullied, the problem is that the actions of bullies are being tolerated!

33% of teens report that students are **frequently** harassed because they are or are perceived to be LGBT.

A national survey found that the form of harassment schoolchildren fear most is anti-LGBT harassment, e.g. being called "faggot" or "sissy."



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

Parents and educators have the *responsibility* to nurture a relationship with one another—support that potential

New School:

Talk to your principal to let them know your child is starting school

Check for anti-harassment & bullying policies and procedures— if they don't exist, help create them, and if they are not LGBT-inclusive help change them

Make sure that all school forms are inclusive—"Parent/Guardian" instead of "Mom/Dad" to ensure that all kinds of families are included

Find out who is on the school board and the PTA—research their records regarding inclusiveness; be a presence; get involved

Here's what you do when it's NEW:

New Teacher:

Introduce your family to your child's teacher

Provide your teacher with the language your family uses— e.g. I'm "Mom," Jill is "Momma," Jason has two dads.

Discuss planned curricula to ensure that it is inclusive and accurate

Talk about potentially sticky situations like how you would like the teacher to handle Father's or Mother's Day and how to respond when other parents have questions about your family

New Grade:

Offer age-appropriate books that include LGBT-headed families

Preview the year's curricula to ensure that families of all kinds are being represented and reflected

Organize a get-together with the parents/guardians of other children in your child's classroom

Be one of the parents who helps and supports your child's groups, clubs and activities

family pride

www.familypride.org

Family Pride is the national organization dedicated to securing family equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents and their families. Together, with the help of family, friends and allies, we are committed to ensuring that all families are visible, valued and protected.

Make the Grade

The Responsibility is on YOU...

Family Pride Will Help

Be proactive at school—don't wait until something goes wrong.

Research has shown that student success in school is directly related to the level of positive interaction between home and school. So be present from the start.

Most schools want to accommodate all children and all families in the best way possible, but it is important to keep in mind that family equality is not your school's only concern. If you find yourself in a position where you need to make change in order to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment for your child, take the initiative!

For example:

- > Get a group of supporters to join you at a school board meeting.
- > Go to parent-teacher conferences.

Instead of asking your principal or teachers to "just do something," be solution-oriented, present concrete and specific ways they can help make your school supportive of family equality.

It's on you...

- > If you want a book in the schools, buy it and donate it—Family Pride will help!
- > If you want people to be able to talk about your family you have to tell them how—Family Pride will help!
- > If you want to build understanding, your family has to be visible—Family Pride will help!

You present the strategy.
You provide the language.
You explain how certain behavior affects your family.

If you don't, who will?

The Strategy...

Although you may be the first LGBT-headed family to attend your school (that you know of), others have gone before you—you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Be OUT (as out as you feel you safely can be in your community).

- > School personnel cannot be supportive of family situations they don't know about.

Be Involved

- > The single best way to become accepted in a school community is to be a presence—at PTA meetings,

committees, classrooms, trips, tutoring or potlucks.

Build a Community of Support

- > There is great strength in numbers and in diverse voices advocating for fairness.



Provide Resources & Language

- > Present a glossary of terms for LGBT-headed families so that teachers and administrators can be confident allies. Also give a list of books, videos and other inclusive resource materials and follow-up to make sure they appear in your child's school. You can find both of these at our website: www.familypride.org.

Listen to Your Children/Youth

- > Let them tell you what they need. They may want to go faster or slower than you. Respect that.

At Every Step... take it one step at a time

You have the tools at your fingertips.

When your children are at these grade levels, here are some great places to start:

- > **Pre-School:** Fix Forms
- > **Elementary School:** Provide Books
- > **Middle School:** Prevent Bullying
- > **High School:** Support Gay/Straight Alliance

Get Involved!

Be OUTSpoken: join the National Speakers Bureau for Family Equality

Contribute to the Campaign: Starting at \$35 (10¢/day); major donor benefits begin at \$100 a month

Up and Coming!

National Awards Dinner
Los Angeles, CA / Oct 14, 2006

Act OUT: the National Family Conference
Dallas, TX / Oct 27-29, 2006

OUT in 50 States: the Town Hall Tour for Equality
Nationwide / 2007-2009



Resources!

> **Opening Doors:** LGBT Parents and Schools

> **Opening More Doors:** Creating Policy Change to Include Our Families

> **OUTSpoken Families:** Family Pride's Speakers Bureau Toolkit

> **52 Ways to Be OUTSpoken!** A once-a-week way to advocate for Family Equality

> **The Family Pride Guide** to Talking with Your Child About Political Attacks on Our Families

Special Offer!

For a great way to promote family equality get the "Buster Bundle" including the DVD and book of the famous episode, plus an amazing equality t-shirt. This is the cartoon that U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings pulled from PBS airwaves because it showed an LGBT-headed family. All proceeds directly benefit Family Pride and COLAGE. To order your bundle go to: www.familypride.org/buster