

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

### 1 *Ask Questions*

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

### 2 *Be Out*

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

### 3 *Get Involved*

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

### 4 *Check Policies*

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

### 5 *Fix Forms*

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

### 6 *Provide Resources*

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

### 7 *Build Community*

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

### 8 *Expect More!*

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

This Resource was prepared and distributed  
by *Family Equality Council*

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