

# WHO CAN MARRY WHOM?

## INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE

With the U.S. Supreme Court decision on marriage equality, schools and educators will be looking for ideas and resources to help them talk about family diversity. When students ask about families with two moms or two dads, be prepared to respond with simple, straightforward answers.

Review our checklist, to ensure that your school is welcoming for all students and their families.

### TALKING ABOUT MARRIAGE

- Marriage is about love, commitment and responsibility.
- Weddings are about celebration and recognition of a committed relationship.
- People can fall in love and want to be in a relationship, no matter their gender.
- The U.S. Supreme Court decision allows for marriage equality in all 50 states.
- All families deserve respect, including families with two moms and two dads.

### SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

#### “Can Jorge’s dads get married? I thought two men couldn’t get married.”

“Yes, his dads can get married now. This summer, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that all the states should allow two men, two women, or a man and a woman to get married.”

“Two men or two women can also get married in a lot of other countries around the world.”

#### “Why would two women or two men want to get married?”

“Because they love each other and want to be together as a family — the same reason all people get married. They want to make a commitment to each other and care for each other for the rest of their lives.”

#### “I heard that Tanya wants to marry Aisha. Can girls get married?”

“Well, children don’t get married. But as adults, many people do get married when they fall in love with someone and decide to make a commitment to each other and want to care for each other and be a family. So as adults, two women can get married, or two men or a woman and a man.”

#### “If two men get married, doesn’t that mean they’re gay? Isn’t that weird?”

“You may have heard many different opinions about being gay. The word ‘gay’ describes people of the same gender who love each other, like a woman and a woman or a man and a man. In our school, we respect all students and their families. Being gay is just one way that people are in this world.”

#### “How can two women have children? Don’t you need a dad?”

“Children come into families in many different ways. Some families may have both a mom and a dad, some have a mom or a dad and some have two moms or two dads. What’s important is to have a family that loves and cares for you.” (Note: If you have a child with two dads or two moms in your classroom, it can be helpful to know how their parents talk about their family. This will help you respond to other students’ questions.)

### RESOURCES FROM WELCOMINGSCHOOLS.ORG

#### Books Featuring Diverse Families

#### Books with Two Moms & Two Dads

#### Welcoming Lesson Plans

Ways to help students feel seen in your classroom including Love Makes a Family and Identity Poems.

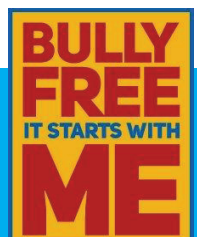
#### Teachable Moments

Be prepared to answer students’ questions and to interrupt bullying.

#### What Can We Do?

#### Bias, Bullying & Bystanders

A short professional development film.



# A CHECKLIST FOR A WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

## Inclusive Language

- Often a family's and student's first contact with a school is through forms, whether completed online or in the school office. Are these forms friendly to different family structures? Do they use language such as 'parent/parent' or 'parent/guardian?' Check through student forms, handbooks and school/home communications to ensure inclusivity.
- Do you model using inclusive language for students, for other staff and educators, and for parents and caregivers when talking about families?

## Mirrors for Their Lives, Windows to the World — Diverse Books and Images

- Do the books in your school reflect the lives of your students? Do your books offer perspectives on families not found in your school? Do your books feature single parent families, adoptive or foster families, two-mom or two-dad families, grandparent-headed families, and multiracial or multiethnic families?
- Do classroom and hallway images show diverse family structures, people of different races, gender expressions, ethnicities and abilities? Do the displays encourage respect for all people?
- Are your students exposed to diverse, positive role models in literature?

## Speaking Up to Stop Mean Words and Actions

- Do teachers and staff interrupt mean teasing or put-downs about a child's identity or their family? Speak up! Ensure that concern for saying the wrong thing doesn't keep you and others silent. Interrupt hurtful name-calling including the derogatory use of the word "gay" and race- or gender-based slurs.
- Are you ready for teachable moments? Practice how to respond when you hear students say things like "That's gay!" "You act like a girl!" or "You're not a real family because you don't have a dad!"
- Does your professional development on bullying and harassment include the opportunity to practice interrupting and stopping bias-based name-calling or bullying and ways to respond to students' questions on diverse families?

## School and Classroom Climate — Setting a Positive, Inclusive Tone for All

- When someone walks into your school, can they tell that all students and their families are welcome? Are there student drawings or written work featured in the hallways highlighting both diversity and commonalities?
- Have you held events recognizing and celebrating family diversity that welcome all children and their families to your school community? Do you foster active relationships between your students' families and your school?
- Do staff and educators treat all families with respect and avoid stereotyping or judgment when communicating with two-mom and two-dad, single-parent, racially diverse and/or multi-linguistic families?
- Do all students have an adult in the school they can connect with? Do families know that their children are respected and able to achieve to the best of their abilities? Connections with families are crucial to children's lives.
- Have you created and implemented clear classroom and schoolwide agreements with your students regarding respect, caring for classmates and not hurting each other with words or actions? Do students know and understand that this means no put-downs or harassment about who someone is or who their family is?
- Do your written bullying policies specifically name groups that are historically bullied or harassed more frequently?



# Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION