

A photograph of a teacher with glasses and curly hair sitting on the floor, reading a book to a group of five children. The children are also sitting on the floor, looking at the book. The background shows a classroom setting with lockers and a door. The entire image has a purple tint.

# GLSEN<sup>®</sup>

## The GLSEN Companion to **NEA'S READ ACROSS AMERICA**

In 2007 an inspired team of educators came together at the National Education Association (NEA) and created what would become the nation's largest reading event. NEA's Read Across America is "an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on the birthday of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss." On this day educators everywhere engage students in all kinds of Dr. Seuss-inspired activities that lead them to "grab their hat and read with the cat!"

There are numerous ways that schools mark the day. Some schools celebrate with D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) time where the entire school takes a moment to enjoy independent reading while others invite "guest readers" to visit schools and classrooms to share a favorite children's book with students. This is a way for adults to share their love of reading and demonstrate to students that reading can be a pleasure throughout one's lifetime.

GLSEN knows from research such as the National School Climate Survey (2014) that few students are exposed to curricular content that is inclusive of LGBT themes. And even though many schools endeavor to expand students' knowledge of diversity few have the tools to expose them to LGBT role models, diverse families or even men and women outside of gender stereotypes.

As such, NEA's Read Across America provides a perfect opportunity to encourage schools to include of the kind of developmentally appropriate literature recommended in GLSEN's *Ready, Set, Respect!* toolkit and add these to the bookshelves in school libraries as well as integrate them into the curriculum. To assist schools with including LGBT-themed literature in classrooms and libraries, GLSEN has prepared this special toolkit for NEA's Read Across America. It provides developmentally appropriate discussion guides for several GLSEN-recommended titles which focus on name-calling and bias, family diversity and gender roles/gender diversity.

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading 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.

# DISCUSSION GUIDES

The titles here are but a few of the many wonderful and developmentally appropriate books that adults can share with elementary school children. These titles are drawn from *Ready, Set, Respect!* GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit which is a much more comprehensive list of books that address core concepts of bullying, name-calling and bias as well as family diversity and gender roles/gender diversity. A discussion guide is included in this toolkit for each of the titles listed here.

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## ***And Tango Makes Three***

Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (Grades K-2)

The true story of Roy and Silo, two male penguins who share a nest like other penguin couples. Given an abandoned egg that needs to be nurtured, the dedicated fathers do a great job of hatching their adorable daughter.

## ***Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio***

Rigoberto González (Grades 3-5)

Mother's Day is coming soon, and Antonio searches for the words to express his love for his mother and her partner, Leslie. But he's not sure what to do when his classmates make fun of Leslie, an artist, who towers over everyone and wears paint-splattered overalls. This story resonates with all children who have been faced with speaking up for themselves or for the people they love.

## ***Chrysanthemum***

Kevin Henkes (Grades K-2)

A young mouse is teased by her classmates because of her unusual and very long name. Chrysanthemum begins to "wilt" until she and the children learn that a favorite teacher also has a long first name and is also named after a flower.

## ***Just Kidding***

Trudy Ludwig (Grades 3-5)

With the help of his dad and teacher, D.J. learns how to stand up to his smart-aleck classmate, who takes his teasing too far.

## ***Oliver Button is a Sissy***

Tomie dePaola (Grades K-2)

Even though Oliver doesn't win first prize at a talent show, his parents and classmates cease their jeering of his "sissy" pursuits.

## ***It's Okay to Be Different***

Todd Parr (Grades K-2)

In fun illustrations and simple words, this picture book explores ways we are different as well as characteristics we all share.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- **The Rainbow Book List** (<http://glbrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/>) is a joint project of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table and the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association. The Rainbow Book List presents an annual bibliography of quality books with significant and authentic LGBTQ content, which are recommended for people from birth through eighteen years of age.
- **The Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature** (<http://www.arnenixoncenter.org/index.shtml>) is a department of the Henry Madden Library at California State University, Fresno. The Center is one of North America's leading resources for the study of children's and young adult literature. Among the center's acquisitions is a collection of 500 LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) themed books. It the largest such collection of LGBT books for young readers in any library in the USA. A bibliography of the center's collection can be found here: [http://www.arnenixoncenter.org/research/biblio\\_PDF/lgbtq\\_bib.pdf](http://www.arnenixoncenter.org/research/biblio_PDF/lgbtq_bib.pdf)

**TITLE:** *And Tango Makes Three*

**AUTHOR:** Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

**PUBLISHER:** Simon & Schuster

**ISBN:** 0-689-87485-1

**GRADE LEVEL:** K-2

**OVERVIEW:**

This book talk is designed to help students realize that there are different family structures including families led by LGBT parents. This is the true story of Roy and Silo, two male penguins who share a nest like other penguin couples, and who are given an egg in need of nurturing.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will identify the basic needs that all families share.
- Students will identify different family structures.

**MATERIALS:** *And Tango Makes Three*

**PROCEDURE:**

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has ground rules, review them or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Begin by saying, “So today, we’re going to hear a story about some real life penguins and the family they create in their nest.”

**ACTIVITY:**

1. Start by letting students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of the book, *And Tango Makes Three*. Show them the cover and tell them the name of the authors and illustrator.
2. Ask them to think about what they might know about the story from the title and the cover illustration. Have them share their ideas with a partner and then have a few students share ideas.

3. Ask them if they think the penguins in the illustration are friends or if they think they are something else?
4. Share what you heard students saying. Lead them to identify that they look like they might be a family.
5. Ask students what they think a family is.
6. Ask students to tell a partner something that is special about their family.
7. Tell students that the penguins are a family and that as you read the story you want them to discover ways that this family is special.
8. After the book ask students the following questions:
  - How is the family similar to their own?
  - How is the baby/child similar to them?
9. What is the problem for the characters and how does it get solved?
10. Do the baby’s needs get met and how?
11. Conclude by telling students that Tango’s family is just one kind of family. Ask them if they think there is a certain number of kinds of families and how they know that. Let students know that through your life you have discovered and met and continue to meet different kinds of families and that you’re not sure there is a certain number of possibilities.

**TITLE:** *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio*

**AUTHOR:** Rigoberto González

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Cecilia Concepción Álvarez

**PUBLISHER:** Children's Book Press

**ISBN:** 978-0-89239-204-9

**GRADE LEVEL:** 3-5

**OVERVIEW:**

This book talk is designed to help students realize that there are different family structures including families led by LGBT parents. This story resonates with all children who have been faced with speaking up for themselves or for the people they love.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will identify the basic needs that all families share.
- Students will identify different family structures.

**MATERIALS:** *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio*

**PROCEDURE:**

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has ground rules, review them or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Begin by saying, "So today, we're going to hear a story about a student and a class in a school just like this one. In this story the students are getting ready for Mother's Day."

**ACTIVITY:**

1. Start by letting students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of the book, *Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio*. Show them the cover and tell them the name of the authors and illustrator.
2. Ask them to think about what they might know about the story from the title and the cover illustration. Have them share their ideas with a partner and then have a few students share ideas.
3. Ask students what they think a family is.
4. Ask students to tell a partner something that is special about their family.
5. Tell students that all families are special and that as you read the story you want them to discover ways that Antonio's family is special.
6. After the book ask students the following questions:
  - How is the family similar to their own?
  - How is Antonio similar to them?
  - What is the problem for the characters and how does it get solved?
7. Conclude by telling students that Antonio's family is just one kind of family. Ask them if they think there is a certain number of kinds of families and how they know that. Let students know that through your life you have discovered and met and continue to meet different kinds of families and that you're not sure there aren't limitless possibilities.

**TITLE:** Chrysanthemum  
**AUTHOR:** Kevin Henkes

**PUBLISHER:** Mulberry Books  
**ISBN:** 0-688-14732-1

**GRADE LEVEL:** K-2**OVERVIEW:**

This book talk is designed to help students realize that differences are a positive thing. In this story, Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect, until she starts school. The other students make fun of her name, but Chrysanthemum learns to love her name, when the teacher shows her it's not that different after all. *Chrysanthemum* explores name-calling and bullying and the negative affects it has on students, as well as why it is important to remain true to who they are.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will learn the importance of valuing difference
- Students will gain an understanding of name-calling and bullying in schools
- Students will identify their own traits that make them different

**MATERIALS:** *Chrysanthemum*

**PROCEDURE:**

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has behavior rules, review them with the teacher or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Start the lesson by saying, "So today, we're going to talk about how it feels to be different. Then, I'm going to read you a story and then we'll talk about the story."

**ACTIVITY:**

1. Start by letting students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of the book *Chrysanthemum*. Ask them if anyone has ever heard that word "chrysanthemum" and what it is.
2. Tell them that in this story, they will hear about a different use of that word and another word like it.
3. Ask them to turn to get a partner and talk to them about what the word "different" means? (Listen in on their conversations and share what you heard students saying).
4. Ask them to give a "thumbs up" if they:
5. Have ever felt different? Invite a few students to share how they felt different.
6. Were ever called a name or put down for being different from others. Ask them to think about how it made them feel? Invite a few students to share how they felt different.
7. Read the book. Note: Because this book has so much dialogue, it is a good idea to create character voices for the eight different characters. This will help students follow the story and know who is speaking.
8. After reading to the students, lead them in a discussion using the following prompts:
9. How would you describe what happened in the story we just read to a friend on the phone?
10. Why did the other students tease Chrysanthemum?
11. Have students turn to a partner and share how they think Chrysanthemum felt.
12. Think about a time that you might have called someone else a name or bullied them because you thought their name was different? Do you think you might have made them feel the way Chrysanthemum felt? Do you think that was right?
13. Why is it wrong to call someone a name or bully them because they are different?

14. Being different makes us special. Everyone is different in some way, we should celebrate our differences, not use them to hurt others.
15. How can we make sure that no one is called names because they are different?
16. Can we all agree that for now on, we will not call people names, or put them down because they are different?

**TITLE:** *Just Kidding*  
**AUTHOR:** Trudy Ludwig

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Adam Gustavson

**PUBLISHER:** Tricycle Press  
**ISBN:** 1-58246-163-5

**GRADE LEVEL:** 3-5

### OVERVIEW:

This book talk is designed to help students realize the negative effects that name-calling and bullying can have on individuals. The book provides a perfect opportunity to explore this as well as the importance of remaining true to ourselves despite others' attempts to make us feel bad.

### OBJECTIVES:

- Students will discuss the difference between harmless teasing and verbal bullying
- Students will gain an understanding of name-calling and bullying in schools
- Students will identify and self-assess their own behaviors related to name-calling or bullying

**MATERIALS:** *Just Kidding*

### PROCEDURE:

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has ground rules, review them or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

### INTRODUCTION:

Begin by saying, *"So today, we're going to talk about learning to respect difference. Then, I'm going to read you a story called Just Kidding, and we'll talk about the story."*

### ACTIVITY:

1. Start by letting students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of the book, *Just Kidding*. Show them the cover and tell them the name of the author and illustrator.
2. Ask them to raise their hand if they have ever heard or said the words "just kidding".
3. Ask them to think about why someone might use the phrase "just kidding." Have them share their thoughts with a neighbor. (Listen in on their conversations).
4. Share what you heard students saying.
5. Ask them to raise their hands if they have ever heard or said, "I didn't mean anything by it" nor "Can't you take a joke." Is "just kidding" the same as these? How or how not? Do you think that saying these, after saying something hurtful, makes it ok? Why? Or Why not?
6. Ask them to think to themselves about how often they say something hurtful, and follow it up with "I was just kidding?"
7. Show them the cover again and ask them to imagine what the book might be about based on the illustration.
8. Read the book *Just Kidding* with the students.
9. After reading the book, lead the students in a discussion using the following prompts:
  - How would you describe what happened in the story we just read to a friend on the phone? Give a "Thumbs up" if you think that D.J. was experiencing friendly joking, or a "thumbs down" if you think he was being bullied?
  - Think about how you would feel if your friends were making those jokes with you. Turn and tell a neighbor.
  - What else did D.J. do to end the bullying? (Told his teacher) Is that something you think you would be comfortable doing if you were being bullied? Ask students to pick a different partner and describe how joking becomes bullying. Listen in on their conversations). Share what you heard students saying.

- Let students know that good-natured teasing involves a playful back-and-forth between friends, and is accompanied by friendly tone of voice, laughter and affectionate gestures. Hurtful teasing or bullying is accompanied by an angry tone, angry body language, and doesn't stop when the person being teased shows distress and requests that the behavior stops.
- Provide students with the teasing or bullying handout. Ask students to review the handout, and moving forward, to think about what they are saying, and ask themselves if the other person will think this is harmless teasing, or bullying.

**TITLE:** *Oliver Button is a Sissy*  
**AUTHOR:** Tomie dePaola

**PUBLISHER:** Voyager Books  
**ISBN:** 0-15-668140-4

**GRADE LEVEL:** K-2

## OVERVIEW:

This book talk is designed to help students identify gender expression-based bullying.

## OBJECTIVES:

- Students will explore their own and others' developing concepts about gender appearance and behaviors
- Students will understand the harm inflicted by name-calling based on stereotypical ideas about gender appearance and interests

**MATERIALS:** *Oliver Button is a Sissy*

## PROCEDURE:

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has ground rules, review them or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

## INTRODUCTION:

Begin by saying, "So today, we're going to hear a story about a boy with unique abilities and think about why others make fun of him for this."

## ACTIVITY:

1. Begin by engaging students in a discussion about colors and how they relate to gender roles and expectations using the following questions:
  - When baby boys are born, what color do they often wear in the hospital or in the clothes they first wear?
  - What other colors are boys told to or expected to wear?
  - When baby girls are born, what color do they often wear in the hospital or in the clothes they first wear?

- What other colors are girls told to or expected to wear?
  - Are there other things besides colors that you think only boys are supposed to like or only girls are supposed to like?
2. Let students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of the book, *Oliver Button is a Sissy*. Show them the cover and tell them the name of the author.
  3. Tell students that the cover picture is of Oliver Button. Ask them what they can learn about Oliver from the picture.
  4. Ask students to raise their hand if they like to paint. Then ask them if painting is something boys are supposed to like or girls are supposed to like.
  5. Read the book to the students, try to notice their reactions.
  6. Ask the students the following questions:
    - What do we call what the other students are doing when words like "sissy" are used to make others feel sad or scared? Lead students to identify "bullying."
    - How do you think Oliver feels when he is called "sissy" by his classmates? His dad?
    - Why was Oliver bullied? Do you think this is right, nice, or okay to do in your classroom or school? Why?
    - If Oliver had not been bullied how would that have changed the story?
    - How can you help change stories like this when you see them?

**TITLE:** *It's OK to Be Different*  
**AUTHOR:** Todd Parr

**PUBLISHER:** Little, Brown and Company  
**ISBN:** 0-316-66603

**GRADE LEVEL:** K-2

**OVERVIEW:**

This book talk is designed to help students realize that being different is a positive thing. The book provides a perfect opportunity to explore name-calling and put-downs at a developmentally appropriate level. *It's OK to Be Different* explores the many ways people are different, and reinforces the concept that it is ok to be different.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will gain an appreciation of differences and identify how their own differences make them special.
- Students will identify how differences are sometimes used by others as tools for name-calling and to put down peers.
- Students will gain an understanding of bullying and name-calling and commit themselves to not engage in it.

**MATERIALS:** *It's OK to Be Different*

**PROCEDURE:**

Have students sit in a comfortable group setting such as a circle or half circle. If class already has ground rules, review them or quickly create some, e.g. respect each other, speak one at a time and so on.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Start the lesson by saying, “So today, we’re going to read a really colorful picture book and then we’re going to talk about the story.”

**ACTIVITY:**

1. Start the activity by letting students know that you will be leading them through a read aloud of a special book. (Do not share the title of the book yet).
2. Show them the cover of the book and tell them who the author is (Todd Parr). Some might read the title aloud for you.
  - Tell them to really study the cover and think about what they see.
  - Have them turn to a partner and share how they would describe the cover to a friend on the phone. (Listen in on their conversations).
  - Share what you heard students saying.
  - Ask students to show a “thumbs up” if they think the cover might provide a clue to what the book is about.
  - Ask what the cover design and the title, *It's OK to Be Different*, suggest the book might be about?
3. Lead the students through a discussion using some or all of the following questions:
4. What does it mean to be different? Have you ever felt different?
5. Tell the students that as you read the book you want them to listen closely for each time you read the words, “It’s okay to…” and think about whether the “okay thing” is something about them or someone they know. Explain to the students that some of these “okay things” are things that some people use to make fun of or name call others. Ask them to try to remember ones that they have heard people use to put others down.
6. Read *It's OK to Be Different* to the students. After reading to the students, lead them in a discussion using the following prompts:
  - Making a smile for “good thing” or frown for “bad thing”: Does the author want us to think being different is good or bad? (Tell them to look around at the faces around them — describe what you see to them).

- Share something that is different about ourselves from others. I'll go first. "I am different because..."
- Try to remember one of the "It's okay" things from the book that they have heard people use to put others down. Have them turn to a neighbor and **without mentioning anybody's name** share a story of a time they remember something like that. (Listen to their conversations).
- Pick out one or two students to share their story with the class.
- Making a smile for "good thing" or frown for "bad thing: Do you think that it's ok to call someone a name, or put them down because you think they are different? (Tell them to look around at the faces around them — describe what you see to them).
- How can we make sure that no one is called names because they are different? Can we all agree that for now on, we will not call people names, or put them down because they are different?



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