

Rainbow Family Connections: Embracing LGBTQ Families at Your Library

How are “Rainbow Families” formed?

- * Divorce – kids from previous marriages
- * Adoption – by one or both partners
- * Surrogacy
- * Child birth
- * Single LGBTQ parents/caregivers
- * LGBTQ children




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Books as Mirrors & Windows

It is important for the self-esteem of LGBTQ children and children with LGBT caregivers to see **themselves and their families** in the books they encounter

“Gay and lesbian kids need to read about people like themselves, just as kids in other minorities do.”
~ Nancy Garden, 2000



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Children in Culturally Pluralistic Society



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Informational Needs of Rainbow Families

- * Developmentally appropriate, high-quality print and digital materials that normalize the experiences of LGBTQ families.
- * Current, accurate information about local organizations serving LGBTQ families.
- * Language in library programs inclusive of LGBTQ families
- * Opportunities to learn about LGBTQ individuals via library displays, collections, and programs.
- * Confidentiality in patron records and discretion when helping LGBTQ family members locate materials
- * Ability to locate LGBTQ materials within the library's catalog and collections



Creating Welcoming Spaces for LGBTQ Families

- * Recognize and address personal prejudices among library staff.
- * Respectful language in programs, readers advisory, and all services.
- * Confront instances of teasing and bullying between children, parents, or library staff.
- * Encourage LGBTQ caregivers to volunteer and participate in children's library programs.



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Creating Welcoming Spaces (Continued)

- * Collaborate with community agencies serving Rainbow Families.
- * Create visual displays and bulletin boards inclusive of all families.
- * Integrate LGBTQ children's books into regular storytimes and arrange on bookshelves alongside other children's books.
- * Examine library materials for stereotypes and biases such as gender stereotypes, sex role stereotypes, homophobia, etc.




Poster source: www.rainbowfamilies.org.au/resources/whos-in-your-family/

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Program Considerations


- * **Selecting Your Books & Program Type**
- * **Choosing Your Words Wisely**
- * **Knowing How to Respond to Children**
- * **Knowing How to Respond to Caregivers, Administrators, & Other Adults**



VS. VS.


“Out and Proud” Program Examples

- * **Events in conjunction with LGBTQ Pride**
- * **Outreach at Rainbow Family Events: picnics, PFLAG meetings, etc.**
- * **Adoption workshops inclusive of LGBTQ topics.**
- * **Family film series with gay-friendly children's films: Oliver Button is a Star, Buster's Outdoor Journey's, etc.**



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“Under the Radar” Subversive & Inclusive Programming



- * **One of the best ways to serve children and caregivers in LGBTQ families.**
- * **You may not want to offer “Rainbow Storytimes” that single out LGBTQ families.**
 - ✓ **Fear of embarrassing Rainbow Families**
 - ✓ **Perceived programs being only for a specific population**

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Why Subversive (Inclusive) Storytimes?

- * Validates the existence of children and caregivers in Rainbow Families
- * Subverts views in the storyhour that all families have a mom and a dad and/or are heterosexual.
- * Normalizes the experiences of children and adults in Rainbow Families, providing a window for children and caregivers in other types of families.



How to be Subversive

- * Change pronouns while reading a book with androgynous animal characters
- * Change character names to become androgynous: Jaime, Rene, Michele, Pat, Chris, etc.
- * Use terms such as "parent" or "caregiver" instead of "mother" or "father"
- * Using books with single parents
- * Share books with ambiguous family constructs: multiple parents, "friends" expressing love, etc.



More Subversive Suggestions

- * Share "gender bending" books from all genres.
- * Invite "out of the box" guest speakers: Male teachers and nurses, female construction workers and business owners, etc.
- * Start a book and allow children to conclude the ending by inserting their own personal experiences via a written, oral, or visual story.



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Considerations in Selecting LGBTQ- Themed Children' s Materials

- * How a child reacts when she/he learns that an important person in her/his life is LGBTQ. (Or, how children embrace their own LGBTQ identity)
- * How the sexual orientation of a LGBTQ character is explained.
- * How the narrative presents the lives of LGBTQ characters and families.
- * How LGBTQ characters are portrayed in illustrations.
- * How gender identity and gender diversity are described.



Example of Stereotyped Image



Illustration detail from *Uncle What-Is-It is Coming to Visit!* By M. Willhoite, 1993: Alyson Books.

Messages about Rainbow Families depicted in storytime materials

- * Are boys "sissies" if they play with dolls, dress up, or have mainly girl friends?
- * Are girls shown outdoors and active?
- * Are females only depicted in dresses and in female-stereotyped roles such as housewife, nurse, mother, etc.?
- * Are males depicted as fathers, elementary teachers, nurses, dancers, etc.?
- * Are families with 2 dads, 2 moms, or single parents represented?
- * Are same-sex parents stigmatized in your materials?
- * Are gender non-conforming children present?



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Balancing Act



Choosing Counter-LGBTQ Materials?

- * A balanced library collection of LGBTQ materials does **NOT** include anti-gay materials.
- * The balance to LGBTQ materials are **heterosexual** materials – which libraries already have a preponderance of.



A Few Recommended Books



Super Daddy! – Me, Age 2

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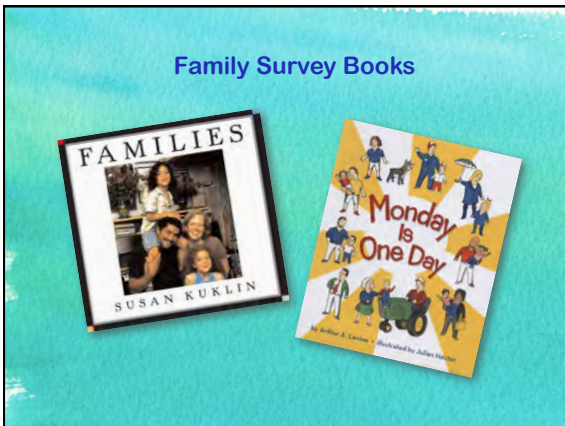




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Book Awards – Rainbow Project



* **Rainbow Books/Rainbow Project -**
glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/rainbow-books-lists

Book Awards – Stonewall



* **Stonewall Children's & YA Literature Award –**
www.ala.org/glbtrt/award

Book Awards – Amelia Bloomer

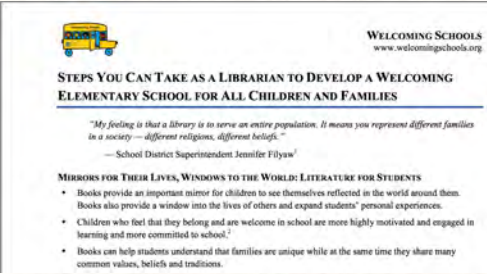


* **Amelia Bloomer List -**
ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/

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Web Resource – Welcoming Schools



WELCOMING SCHOOLS
www.welcomingschools.org

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE AS A LIBRARIAN TO DEVELOP A WELCOMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

"My feeling is that a library is to serve an entire population. It means you represent different families in a society — different religions, different beliefs."
— School District Superintendent Jennifer Filyaw

MIRRORS FOR THEIR LIVES, WINDOWS TO THE WORLD: LITERATURE FOR STUDENTS

- Books provide an important mirror for children to see themselves reflected in the world around them. Books also provide a window into the lives of others and expand students' personal experiences.
- Children who feel that they belong and are welcome in school are more highly motivated and engaged in learning and more committed to school.²
- Books can help students understand that families are unique while at the same time they share many common values, beliefs and traditions.

www.welcomingschools.org/pages/steps-you-can-take-as-a-librarian

Pink Parenting UK Magazine (Digital and Print)



www.pink-parenting.com/

Rainbow Rumpus – Online Children’s Literary Magazine




www.rainbowrumpus.org/

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Librarian Resources from the Author




Rainbow Family Collections
Selecting and Using Children's Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender-Curious Content
Jane Campbell Naidoo

Over the Rainbow and Under the Radar
What Schools and Parents in 2014 Need to Know
By Jane Campbell Naidoo

Children & Libraries Article - Dec 2013

Summing it Up - *New Yorker* Cartoon



"I have two memories. I know where the sperm goes."

Source: http://www.newyorker.com/humor/issuecartoons/2011/05/02/cartoons_201104257
fb_ref=social_fblike&fb_source=home_multiline#slide=11

**QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?**

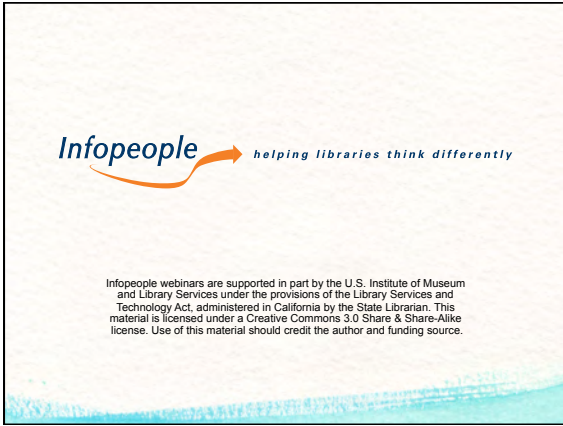
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