

Lesson 7:

STEREOTYPES ABOUT LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Grades 4-5 And Grades 6-8



In the film, a number of lesson plans helped students look at stereotypes as they broadly affect their lives, specifically in relation to lesbian and gay people. The fourth-grade class at Public School 87 in New York City, participated in a word association exercise to explore stereotypes about lesbian and gay people. The third-grade lesson from the Hawthorne Elementary Public School in Madison, Wisconsin, and the eighth-grade lesson from Burbank Public Middle School in San Francisco used word webs.

In all of these lessons it was apparent that teachers were building upon teaching tools and content that they had previously used in their classrooms. A fourth-grade teacher from Public School 87 referred back to a similar exercise that the class had done related to stereotypes about Native Americans. An eighth-grade teacher from Burbank Middle School started a lesson by discussing stereotypes that students experienced about ethnic groups, teens and others before moving on to stereotypes about lesbian and gay people.

In schools where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) people have not previously been discussed in the curriculum, it is helpful to use lessons that relate to material that has been taught, such as other units about discrimination and stereotypes. The following lesson plans combine elements from a number of the lessons highlighted in the film. The first lesson plan is designed for grades 4-5 and the second one for grades 6-8.

STEREOTYPES ABOUT LGBT PEOPLE

Grades 4-5

Goals

- Students will increase their awareness of stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
- To dispel students' stereotypes and misinformation about LGBT people.

Objectives

- Students will be able to define the word stereotype.
- Students will be able to identify stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.
- Students will learn that LGBT people are represented among all races, genders, religions, socio-economic classes and professions.
- Students will learn that LGBT people have made important contributions within the United States and beyond.

Time Required

One 45-minute session or two 30-minute sessions.

Materials

Chart paper and markers

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Cards (on page 94 in this guide) cut into individual cards. (Optional)

Activity 1: Defining Stereotypes

- Write the word *stereotype* on the board. Ask students what the word means. Record their answers on the board or easel paper.
- Write on the board the word "kindergartners" and ask students to brainstorm all of the stereotypes they have heard about kindergartners. (You can also substitute 'girls' or 'boys' for kindergartners.) Ask students:
 - » Do some kindergartners fit some of these stereotypes?
 - » Do all kindergartners fit all of these stereotypes?
 - » How do you think these stereotypes might make kindergartners feel?

- Make sure students recognize that:
 - » A stereotype makes people believe that everyone who is part of a certain group is the same in some way. For example, all teenagers cause trouble, or all girls can't do math, or all boys are not sensitive to other people's feelings.
 - » Stereotypes are hurtful. Sometimes they make us think we can't do things that maybe we actually can do. Sometimes they make us ignore what other people are capable of doing.

Activity 2: Stereotypes about LGBT People

- Form groups of four to five students each. Ask each group to brainstorm all the words they think about when they think about LGBT people. Have them write down their list on a piece of large paper.
- Ask each group to read aloud their list and record it on the board OR post the lists and read them aloud.
- Review the whole list. Ask:
 - » What do you notice about the words on this list?
 - » Where did you learn the things you brainstormed?
- Review the class definition of stereotypes.
- Review how stereotypes can be hurtful.
- Ask the group to identify why some things on the list are stereotypes.
- Discuss why these stereotypes are incorrect and hurtful to LGBT people and people with LGBT family members.
- Ask the students, "Looking back at our definition of stereotypes—is there anything you would add or subtract?"

Activity 3: The Diversity of LGBT People

Taking a look at the diversity among LGBT people is a natural follow-up to discussing stereotypes and where they come from. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are represented among all races, professions, etc. Some LGBT people fit some of the stereotypes and some do not. This activity helps students see the breadth of the LGBT community. Some of the famous people featured in this activity were also featured in the Hawthorne Elementary School Classroom unit on famous LGBT people.

- Form small groups of four to five students each.
- Pass to each group at least five LGBT people cards.
There are enough cards so you can pick and choose the cards that best reflect the interests, age, and reading level of your students. Make sure that the cards given to each group are diverse in relation to gender, profession, race, ethnicity, etc. You do not need to use all of the cards.

- Ask the groups to read the cards aloud within their group.
- Once they have read the cards, ask the groups to discuss the following questions: (It may be helpful to have adults or older students monitor the small group discussions).
 - » Were you surprised to learn that this person is gay or lesbian? Why or why not?
 - » What about them made you think they were not gay or lesbian?
 - » What more did you learn about them besides that they were gay or lesbian? Did that also surprise you and why?
 - » How does this person challenge our stereotypes we put up on the board about gay and lesbian people?
 - » What does this teach us about stereotypes?
- At the end of the activity, ask each group to report back what they learned about stereotypes and LGBT people.



TEACHING NOTES

Extension Activity Media Analysis

Have students record references to LGBT people that they see on television or hear in music and discuss how the media perpetuates stereotypes.

- What other groups are stereotyped or ridiculed in pop culture?
- What have different groups done about it?
- What can young people do about it?

This extension activity can be used to generate deeper conversations about stereotypes and harmful language. Discussion questions might include:

- Why do you think certain language is used?
- How do you think the language makes people feel?
- Where do you find negative, positive or neutral portrayals of LGBT people?
- What do you think about the way that LGBT people are portrayed?

It can also be used in conjunction with writing assignments or math lessons. For example, students can be asked to draw graphs representing what kind of language is used where in the school or to use math skills to look at the frequency or percentage of positive, negative or neutral portrayals/referrals of LGBT people on television or in music.



From The Film

"It should be mandatory, and I think that it's a healthy way of

teaching students to respect each other, understand each other. Academics are definitely important, but we also want them to develop, to reach an understanding so that they can resolve a crisis without becoming explosive. They need to understand it, so they can move on to learning." —George Sloan, middle school principal in *It's Elementary*

Transgender People Cards

All of the people listed here are LGBT



PHOTOCOPY BEFORE CUTTING

Barney Frank

1940-present: An American politician and a member of the United States House of Representatives. As an openly gay male Democrat, he has represented Massachusetts's Fourth congressional district since 1981.

It's Elementary

Lupe Valdez

1947-present: An American who on January 1, 2005, became the first woman and openly lesbian to be sworn in as Sheriff of Dallas County, Texas.

It's Elementary

Rudy Galindo

1969-present: An openly gay male Mexican American figure skater who won the 1988 World Junior Championship and the U.S. senior championships in 1989 and 1990.

It's Elementary

James Baldwin

1924-1987: African-American novelist, playwright and civil rights activist. Baldwin's work deals with issues related to being black and gay. He is best known for his novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953).

It's Elementary

Barbara Jordan

1936-1996: An African-American politician from Texas who served as congresswoman in the United States House of Representatives from 1973 to 1979. Barbara lived for 25 years with her companion Nancy Earl.

It's Elementary

Evelyn Mantilla

1978-present: Puerto Rican-American politician represents the Fourth district of the Connecticut House of Representatives. She is one of the few acting politicians who is openly bisexual and a person of color.

It's Elementary

Sir Ian McKellen

1939-present: A gay English stage and screen actor and two-time Academy Award® nominee. He is best known for his roles as Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* and as Magneto in *X-Men*. He has been a vocal activist for LGBT rights.

It's Elementary

Tammy Baldwin

1962-present: First American woman elected to Congress from the state of Wisconsin. She was also the first ever openly gay politician to be elected to the House of Representatives.

It's Elementary

José Zuniga

1970-present: American Army veteran named the 1992 Soldier of the Year. Six weeks later he came out as a gay man. As a result of this he was no longer allowed to remain in the Army.

It's Elementary

Elton John

1947-present: An English pop/rock singer, composer and pianist. Elton John, who is openly gay, wrote the music for the musical *The Lion King* and is one of the most successful musical artists of all time.

It's Elementary

Lance Bass

1979-present: An American singer best known from the former pop group N*Sync. He came out in 2006 in the front-page cover article for *People* magazine.

It's Elementary

Ellen DeGeneres

1958-present: An openly American lesbian actress, stand-up comedian, and currently the Emmy Award-winning host of the syndicated talk show *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

It's Elementary

Sheryl Swoopes

1971-present: An African-American lesbian professional basketball player in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). As a three-time Olympic Gold Medalist and WNBA MVP, Swoopes is the most recognizable athlete to come out in a team sport.

It's Elementary

Christine Penner

1957-present: In 2007, this American *Los Angeles Times* sportswriter underwent sexual reassignment surgery, changing his name from Mike to Christine after 23 years of employment as a man.

It's Elementary

Christina Aguilera

1980-present: An openly bisexual American pop singer and songwriter. She came to prominence following her debut album *Christina Aguilera* (1999), which was a critical and commercial success.

It's Elementary

Josephine Baker

1906-1975: An African-American lesbian entertainer most noted for her singing and contributions to the Civil Rights Movement in North America.

It's Elementary

John Ameachi

1970-present: A retired Nigerian-English NBA basketball player who publicly announced his gay identity in February 2007. He is the first player associated with the NBA to come out.

It's Elementary

Frida Kahlo

1907-1954: A bisexual Mexican painter who depicted the indigenous culture of her country in a style combining realism, symbolism and surrealism.

It's Elementary

Melissa Etheridge

1961-present: An American lesbian Academy Award® winning rock musician and singer. Etheridge won the Oscar® for Best Original Song, featured in Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.

It's Elementary

Patria Jimenez

1957-present: A Mexican lesbian politician. In 1997 she became the first openly gay member of Mexico's legislature in the country's history—indeed, the first in any legislature in Latin America.

It's Elementary

George Takai

1937-present: A Japanese-American actor best known for his portrayal of Mr. Sulu in the acclaimed *Star Trek* television and film series. Takei is an openly gay advocate for LGBT rights.

It's Elementary

B.D. Wong

1960-present: An openly gay Asian-American actor. He is best known for his roles as Dr. George Huang on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, as Dr. Henry Wu in *Jurassic Park* and Ngwang Jigme in *Seven Years in Tibet*.

It's Elementary

PHOTOCOPY BEFORE CUTTING

Marlon Brando

1924-2004: Bisexual two-time Academy Award®-winning American actor and star of *The Godfather*. He was named one of the greatest male stars of all time by the American Film Institute.

It's Elementary

Billie Joe Armstrong

1972-present: A self-identified bisexual American lead vocalist, main lyricist, and guitarist for the rock band Green Day.

It's Elementary

Rosie O'Donnell

1962-present: An American lesbian 11-time Emmy Award-winning American talk show host, comedienne and stage actress. O'Donnell and her partner are long-time supporters and activists for same-sex households and marriage rights.

It's Elementary

Angelina Jolie

1975-present: Bisexual American film actress and Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency. She has received three Golden Globe Awards, two Screen Actors Guild Awards and an Academy Award®.

It's Elementary

Oscar Wilde

1854-1900: A bisexual Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and short story writer. Known for his barbed wit, he was one of the most successful playwrights of late-Victorian London, and one of the greatest celebrities of his day.

It's Elementary

Walt Whitman

1819-1892: A gay American poet, essayist, journalist and humanist. Proclaimed the "greatest of all American poets" by many foreign observers a mere four years after his death.

It's Elementary

Bayard Rustin

1912-1987: A gay African-American civil rights activist and principal organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He counseled Martin Luther King, Jr. on techniques of nonviolent resistance.

It's Elementary

Magdalen Hsu-Li

1970-present: A bisexual Chinese-American singer-songwriter, painter, speaker, poet and activist. She founded Chickpop Records.

It's Elementary

Add Your Own

It's Elementary

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