



Teachable Moments for LGBTQ Families

By **Steve Disselhorst**

When our daughter started her elementary school experience this fall, my husband's and my biggest hope was that she would feel comfortable,

that she'd not be treated differently. We found the school administration was very supportive, welcoming, and open. There were no indications of anything that would be difficult. But there also wasn't any indication that they have a formal program that addresses inclusive schools for LGBTQ families. Perhaps not surprisingly, within a week, she was teased for having two dads.

We learned a lot back when she was in preschool. We wanted the same thing for her—that she make friends and be treated fairly. Our biggest initial anxiety came from those exercises in which they have a "Family of the Week" to highlight. Lorevic

and I came in and read books, and kids were saying things to our daughter like, "Where's your mommy?" We had things to say in response to that: our kids are adopted; it's an open adoption; we were there at her birth. We worked to get other kids to understand there are birth parents, and there are parents who raise you, and sometimes those are different people. All that language, all those words, all that discussion is a lot for a little kid to communicate about their own family. But it's also difficult being the parent, having to communicate the messaging ourselves, when it should be coming from the school.

When we dug a little deeper at the preschool, we came up with some ideas about ways to help. There were other gay families there, but there were also other diverse families, like single-parent households. So our question became: How do we make all families feel included and accepted here? I made a suggestion that the preschool start an inclusive family group which could meet quarterly. They were very excited about the idea, but they never followed through. They came back and said, "We couldn't think of a name for it that would not offend

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Diversity in the Classroom: One Mom's Approach

By **Sarah Thompson-Peer**

When we think about diversity in our schools, we usually are asking whether different groups are represented. Are there members of minority groups? Is my child exposed to families with two moms? Two dads? Transgender individuals? Are minority groups well-represented, or is my child the only one from a queer family? If this is the case, will they be subject to tokenization (a phenomenon where a single member of an underrepresented group becomes a stand-in for all members of that group)?

Bullying? These are important questions to ask ourselves. But there's more to diversity than just being exposed to different people from different backgrounds. Of equal importance is how that diversity is being taught and addressed.

My parents came of age in the 60s, against the backdrop of the Civil Rights movement, so they recognized and

acknowledged the benefits of sending their child to a school with a diverse student population.

Like many who came from a background of privilege, they were uncomfortable discussing differences, hoping instead that exposure to those of different backgrounds would make me culturally competent. When I asked about differences—whether about gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, ability, or any other uncomfortable topics, I was told to be quiet—asking questions wasn't polite.

Unfortunately, acceptance and lack of bias isn't something human beings learn through osmosis. Research shows that exposure to difference is not enough. Humans' brains begin identifying and categorizing around ages three to four. This



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Moving Movements: What Does Health Have to Do with It?

by **Renata Moreira**,
Executive Director

Like many of us working for social transformation and often on the frontlines of trauma, I had reached a breaking point earlier this summer. I was becoming irritated with team members, reactive with my beloved child, and stressed out full time by our current socio-political conditions.

A friend urged me to take a digital detox and find ways to break the soul-fatigue. With the support of my family and team, I took her advice and attended a five day "re-set" retreat during the solar eclipse. At the retreat, I intentionally sought out trauma informed practices and came across Emotion in Motion, a technique which embodies movement, awareness of breath, and storytelling to help us root ourselves and from there, forge pathways to innovative, meaningful, powerful, and daring work.

And that it did. As we began the course, the teacher set a beautiful brave space that invited us to set our critiques to the side and open our hearts to investigating our inner landscapes. After a few guided steps, my imagination took flight. My defenses and fears—of not knowing the right steps, of stumbling—melted away. My body began moving in ways it never had before. I cried ancient cries from deep within me, and—as the teacher guided us to keep moving—my sobs released the trauma that my ancestors and communities have carried for generations.

I was messy, and I was free. And I got a glimpse of what I am working for on a larger scale, side by side with you, my beloved community: life-affirming, healing, systems-transforming joy and love in everything we do.

I believe it is possible to heal ourselves and our communities despite external opposition. I believe we can cultivate bridges to one another, building communities that make us feel great

about ourselves as LGBTQ parents and caregivers of all identities and help us develop compassion for those that are still waking up to the journey towards justice. I believe that—together—we can awaken, inspire, and ignite healing and transformation in all that we encounter on our paths. But in order to do so, we have to put on our own oxygen masks first. We have to be willing to create intentional time for self-care, and to take a leap of faith to trust ourselves and each other.

First, we must care for ourselves. It is important to develop a discipline or practice that allows us—not a privileged few, but all of us—to cultivate heart qualities of gratitude, generosity, and patience. Rooted in these qualities, we can then create authentic, multi-cultural, multiracial, intersectional movements that are truly power-transforming and life-sustaining.

Next, we must be willing to get messy. We need to risk stumbling, getting it wrong, owning it, making amends, and trying again. Look at toddlers: they stumble all the time, shamelessly. They know that stumbling is integral to getting from point A to point B. We all had this unselfconscious curiosity once, and it's still there, ready to be invited out again.

Finally, we must take a leap of trust. We carry the baton as far as we can—helping make change at our child's school, or trying to change the mind of someone at work, in a place of worship, or in our extended family—but then we need a break. Trust is not easy, especially for those of us who have experienced trauma on an individual or social level. But I promise that when we do, we discover we are not alone. Made whole again by self-care, we can be there for another: someone else who, like us, is reaching out for a hand to help carry the baton. ➤

FAIR Education at Our Family Coalition

By Rick Oculito,
Education Manager

In July of 2011, the FAIR Education Act (SB48), authored by Mark Leno [D], was passed in California, requiring all schools that receive public funding to adopt books and materials with fair, accurate, inclusive, and respectful representations of LGBT people. This resulted in the formation of the FAIR Education Coalition, consisting of several LGBT organizations, including the LGBT Historical Society, a group of history scholars dedicated to researching and representing accurate LGBT history. In the past six years Our Family Coalition has served as the lead agency in this Coalition, helping develop the History and Social Science Framework, which serves as the standard that history and social science texts must meet in order to be accepted as curriculum in California.

This summer, Our Family Coalition reconvened the FAIR Education Coalition when we were alerted by our partners in the LGBT Historical Society that the drafts of the textbooks being considered for adoption by the California Department of Education (CDE) were not in compliance with standards established by the FAIR Education Act. The FAIR Education Coalition pored through over 20 different texts from 8 different publishers, some over 300 pages long, to ensure that there was meaningful representation of LGBT people and communities in them.

We developed detailed recommendations, based off of the accepted framework, on how to make these histories more inclusive. In some cases we had to recommend outright rejection of the textbooks because they represented LGBT people and issues poorly and, in a select few texts,

actually portrayed the LGBT community negatively. Along with many community members and FAIR Education Coalition allies, Our Family Coalition was able to contribute commentary and edits for many of these texts and returned to Sacramento to provide further public commentary on the importance and necessity of LGBT inclusion.

The work for FAIR Education has not been solely an exercise of advocacy and editing, however. The Education Team of Our Family Coalition has actively been creating and curating content for educators that don't want to wait for the textbooks to reflect our communities. Through our website (faireducationact.org), we provide lesson plans, resources, and training opportunities around LGBT history. In our trainings we offer methods to address LGBT issues in the classroom and to provide context for LGBT themes and historical figures. In addition, recognizing these topics are new for many educators as well as communities, we also provide tools to convey the importance of LGBT inclusion both to educators and families within the school community.



Parents, community members, organizational representatives and a middle school student, following their testimony on behalf of LGBTQ-inclusive textbooks at the IQC meeting in August.



Education Director Tarah Fleming and Education Manager Rick Oculito at the CA Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) meeting, Sacramento, August 17, 2017

It is our hope that our efforts ensure the next generation in California will have LGBT inclusive history and social science textbooks in their classrooms. In these current times, when our brethren in the trans and non-binary communities are disparaged, belittled, and marginalized in such a callous fashion, it is crucial to recognize the value of just and accurate representation. As we elucidated for the review panels in Sacramento, while they were laying the foundation for how history would be taught, it was crucial to understand that the ways in which we present history will determine how we will treat each other in the future. Building empathy across different understandings and experiences is a critical lesson for our youth to resolve and compromise differences in ways that honor the meaningful contributions each of us bring to our communities. ☺



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Diversity in the Classroom...

(continued from page 1)

categorization is evolutionarily adaptive, and it's a process that we continue to rely on throughout our lives. Categorizing helps us identify safe and dangerous objects in the world around us. There is evolutionary pressure to learn these lessons quickly. But much of this sorting and categorizing goes on unconsciously, so adults can't exactly tell what assumptions and generalizations our kiddos are making about the world around them. When parents and teachers don't provide assistance and tools to help young brains categorize, they rely on what they're exposed to.

And anyone who pays any attention to pop culture and the media probably recognizes the pitfalls with this approach: Disney movies have a habit of reducing entire groups of marginalized populations to stereotypes; news outlets—whether intentionally or not—reinforce biases about race, gender, and sexuality; even something so simple as a child getting into a fight with the only kid with an accent can lead to harmful biases later on in life.

My experience in San Francisco as a queer mom has mostly been a positive one: my son is four and attends a play-based cooperative preschool. We are not the only queer family at the school and his teacher understands the necessity of addressing diversity of all types. When a kiddo asks, "Where is your dad?" the response is to point out that not all families look the same. Some have two dads. Some have two moms.

Some have step parents and others have single parents. This diversity is something to be celebrated and appreciated. And the beauty is that other preschoolers usually take this in stride because they don't know any different. They haven't been told that this is unusual. And so when they play house with their friends, their play broadens. Sometimes there are two moms, sometimes there are more. Sometimes my son is one of the moms, sometimes he's the dad, and sometimes he's the baby. But imagine if the original question, "Where is your dad?" was answered with

what used to be the go-to answer: "Shhhhhhh. Asking such things is rude." The child could internalize that something is wrong about having no dad and that's why they're not allowed to ask. And something so simple helps to plant the seeds of bias that will continue into adulthood and beyond.

So what can we do as queer parents?

- **Ask your child's teacher how they intend to incorporate different kinds of diversity in the curriculum.** What do they see their role is when it comes to teaching diversity? Most importantly, remember that teachers are busy, so ask how you can help them out.
- **Look at the classroom environment.** Are there books, posters, and other media that represent people of different backgrounds? Part of creating a diverse environment isn't just about having classroom materials that discuss diversity, it's about having materials about everyday things that happen to include diverse groups.
- **Consider your school's approach to diversity.** Does the principal believe addressing diversity is one of their priorities? Are they familiar with best practices? Again, can you be of any assistance? Parents can be incredibly effective in helping create a space to discuss diversity within a school. Also, most parents could benefit from a bit of parent education and diversity training for themselves!
- **Get comfortable with difficult conversations with your child.** Encourage questions and open and honest discussion. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest about that. Perhaps finding the answer can be an activity you work on together.
- **Be open with your child's friends about diversity.** Don't get defensive when they ask uncomfortable questions. Be open and honest, be straightforward. Sometimes, you may be the one queer family a child is exposed to. Yeah, that sucks, but it's also the chance to educate and expose someone to differences. ↻

Sarah Thompson-Peer is a San Francisco mother, activist, lawyer, teacher and board member for Our Family Coalition; her four year old son attends preschool.

Teachable Moments

(continued from page 1)

others." These are the types of things we faced there: good intentions; insufficient follow-through.

One thing we did that has become very helpful is a holiday tradition. Every Christmas, since our daughter was two years old, we had a Christmas party at our house for her teachers. It was important to us that they come into our home as a way to thank them for helping take care of our kids, but also provide them a chance to get to know gay families, for those who weren't familiar with us. We would bring them into our home where they'd see our wedding pictures, our family pictures: things that say, "This is who we are."

The first year was easy because she had just three or four teachers. Then, as the years went on, every class she went into, we'd keep adding on teachers for every year. Last year, we hosted 20 people! Our son had begun daycare at the same place, and his five teachers added into the teachers our daughter had over her years there. The teachers loved it. They said no one had ever invited them into their homes. It was really fun for all of us.

We didn't think about this as a way to manipulate education. It was much more inspired from our desire to give back to them. But instead of doing it at the preschool, if we did it at our home, they could see who we are as a family. ↻

San Bruno dads Steve Disselhorst and Lorevic Rivera have a child in kindergarten and in preschool. Steve works in marketing at a biotech company, is active in his church community, and is a board member for Our Family Coalition.

CALENDAR

TUE
Oct 3, 10, 17,
24, 30
Nov 7, 14,
20
6–8pm

Positive Parenting Program

OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO

OFC staffers will guide LGBTQ parents and caregivers through the 12-week Positive Parenting Program. Triple P is designed to promote positive parenting practices in the community, prevent a range of social and behavioral problems in children, and aims to support parents to promote their child's social, emotional, and behavioral development. For parents and caregivers with children 2–10 years old. Class meets weekly on Tuesdays for 12 weeks, except as noted.

SF

SAT
Oct 14
12:30–
1:45pm

Field Trip to Junior Center of Art and Science

LAKESIDE PARK, 558 BELLEVUE AVE., OAKLAND

Let's build rocket ships together! The rocket-science themed field trip will be facilitated by a Junior Centre instructor and there will be hands-on activities for families to enjoy. Space is limited so remember to register online!

EB

SAT
Oct 21
1–4pm

Monster Mash Halloween Bash

EMBARCADERO YMCA, 169 STEUART ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Join us and other LGBTQ families for some swampy swimming, spooky dancing, creepy crafts and tasty treats at the Embarcadero YMCA. There will be fun activities for little monsters of all ages. Don't forget your costume, and join us for this year's Halloween Bash!

SF

WED
Oct 25
6:30–
9:30pm

Womb to Grow: Conception Reception

PRESERVATION PARK, OAKLAND

This evening event provides a comprehensive overview of alternative conception for queer people with wombs looking to become pregnant. Prospective parents will have the chance to hear from a range of LGBTQ-friendly fertility and reproductive service providers, legal experts, and non-profit organizations.

EB

*Free childcare and food are provided at all events, with advance registration.
For further information and event registration, visit www.ourfamily.org.*

SF Pride & Family Garden

JUNE

25

Thanks to everyone
who came out to SF Pride.
We had an amazing time!





Family BBQ & Campout

What a beautiful weekend at our annual Family BBQ and Campout! Thank you all who joined us!

JULY

14-16



SUN
Oct 29
TBD

Celebrate Día de los Muertos with OFC and Somos Familia!

FRUITVALE PLAZA, OAKLAND

Join us to celebrate Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) in Fruitvale Plaza. There will be music, altars, dancing, food, and much more. Stop by our altar to celebrate our Latinx LGBTQ ancestors and the incredible Latinx LGBTQ lives lost to violence.

EB

TUE
Oct 31
Nov 2
Nov 8
Nov 9
6-8pm

Four-part Social Emotional Learning Series

BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND

Join trainer Shawn Bryant as he shares with us how we can encourage and effectively apply the attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage our children's needs and emotions. Shawn is an educational coach, facilitator, and consultant with over 28 years of educational experience in urban, suburban, and rural school district and early learning settings. Attendees will practice developing a behavior support plan for children needing individualized intensive interventions, learn simple strategies to support children in navigating the complex world of friends, and how to teach children to self regulate by exploring strong emotions. Check out our website to learn more about the topics in each session.

EB

WED
Nov 15
6-8pm

Child Development Ages and Stages: Tweens and Teens

OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO

Join us for a workshop on the emotional, physical, and social development of tweens and teens.

SF

THU
Nov 16
6-8pm

Storytelling for Change: An Interactive, Hands-On Workshop for LGBTQ Parents, Caregivers, and Their Children

BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND

Learn how to creatively tell your families' stories to advance progressive social change in our communities. Our communications experts will support you in the production and distribution of your story. Storytellers will have full ownership of content and use of their work. Come get inspired to inspire the world!

EB

SUN
Dec 10
1-4pm

Foster-Adoption Mini Conference

THE WOMEN'S BUILDING, 3543 18TH ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Join us for information sharing, panel discussions, and an agency meet and greet for LGBTQ families exploring foster-adoption. There will also be a special screening of the first episode of "The F Word: A Foster-Adopt Story," followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers. Food and child care provided with advanced registration, walk-ins welcomed!

SF

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- Mindfulness/Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

PLAYGROUPS

TUESDAYS

Oct 3, 10, 17, 24, 31,
Nov 7, 14, 21, 28
Dec 5, 12
10–11:30am

LGBTQ Parent-Child Interactive Playgroup (0–5 years)

DESTINY ARTS, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND

Interactive play and circle time for infants, toddlers, and their grown ups, including fun activities like music, movement, and storytelling, now at Destiny Arts' beautiful Northwest Oakland space. Healthy snacks provided!

EB

FIRST

SATURDAYS

Oct 7
Nov 4
Dec 2

11:30am–2pm

East Oakland Community Playtime

YOUTH UPRISING SKATE PARK, 8711 MAC ARTHUR BLVD., OAKLAND

Enjoy outdoor games, a community market, fun multicultural activities, arts and crafts, and story time by the Oakland Public Library.

EB

FRIDAYS

Oct 6, 13, 20, 27
Nov 3, 10, 17
Dec 1, 8, 15
9–10:15am

Toddle with Me: Music & Movement Class (18 months–5 years)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

Offered weekly, our music and movement classes promote your child's overall development. Using creative physical expression, these classes promote gross and fine motor skill development, coordination and balance, as well as early literacy, pre-math, and social-emotional skills.

SF

FRIDAYS

Oct 6, 13, 20, 27
Nov 3, 10
10:45am–12pm

Baby & Me: Infant Class (0–18 months)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

Want more quality time with your little one? OFC will be hosting a 6-week infant class for LGBTQ parents and caregivers. This parent-child interactive helps support child bonding, health, and increases your know-how about your infant's cognitive, physical, and language development!

SF

SUPPORT GROUPS

FIRST

WEDNESDAYS

Oct 4
Nov 1
Dec 6
5:30–7:30pm

Rainbow Family Night

HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY

LGBTQ parents are invited to join our facilitated support group to connect, share experiences, swap tips, and discuss issues relevant to our families, while kids have a great time playing in the Habitot Children's Museum.

EB

FIRST

THURSDAYS

Oct 5
Nov 2
Dec 7
6–8pm

Drop-In Support for Parents of Tweens & Teens

OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO

Raising teens, tweens (or both!) can often be filled with awkward moments, confusion, and stress. With a parent-peer leading the charge, you will have space to connect and decompress about your experiences while youth meet with a COLAGE youth leader to chill, laugh, and talk about... whatever teens and tweens talk about.

SF

SATURDAYS

Oct 14
Nov 18
12–2pm

Transgender Parent Support Group

OUR FAMILY COALITION, 1385 MISSION ST., SUITE 340, SAN FRANCISCO

Trans parents, prospective parents, and co-parents connect and share what's on their minds. From the workplace to trans activism, transition to temper tantrums, discuss whatever you'd like in a safe space with friendly, supportive people. Lunch and child care provided with advance registration. Newcomers welcome!

SF

TUESDAYS

Oct 24
Nov 28
6–8pm

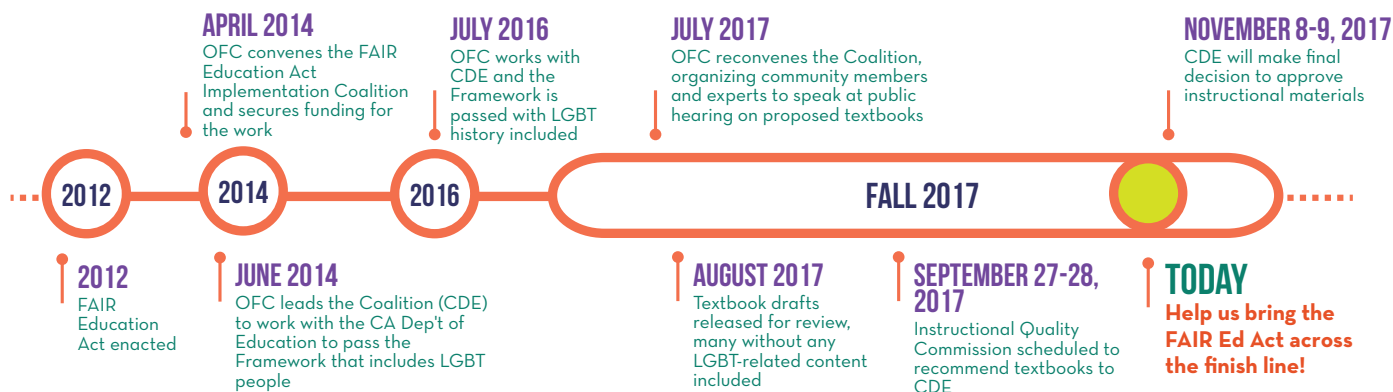
LGBTQ+ Family Night for Solo & Partnered Parents

CHILDREN'S DAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 333 DOLORES ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ families, then join one of two parent groups—for solo parents or for co-parents/caregivers—for facilitated discussions about family and child-rearing issues. Dinner and childcare provided with advance registration.

SF

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Pacific Gas & Electric
Company
San Francisco
Foundation
Target Corporation
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and queer (LGBTQ) families with
children through support, education,
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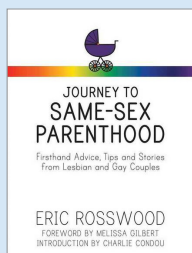
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Journey to Same-Sex Parenthood By Eric Rosswood

FROM THE PUBLISHER: In *Journey to Same-Sex Parenthood*, author, activist, and father Eric Rosswood

guides prospective LGBT parents to explore these five popular options: adoption, foster care, assisted reproduction, surrogacy, and co-parenting. Each section includes a description of the specific family-building approach, followed by personal stories from same-sex couples and individuals who have chosen and gone through that particular journey. The appendix contains important legal issues to consider and questions to ask before deciding to move forward, along with a list of reasons why people may choose each of the five family-building paths and the challenges they may encounter. Note: this October, look for Rosswood's second book: *The Ultimate Guide for Gay Dads: Everything You Need to Know About LGBTQ Parenting But Are (Mostly) Afraid to Ask*.



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