

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[®]

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.

