

What Children Learn During

GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week

Commentary from Candi Cushman, Education Analyst

During the last week in January, kids in public schools across the land will be participating in yet another event sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). But this time the event in question—No Name-Calling Week—is aimed primarily at elementary and middle school kids.

While No Name-Calling Week does have some laudable goals, such as “eliminating harmful name-calling,” unfortunately, the event also emphasizes the usual homosexuality indoctrination that has made GLSEN infamous.

If you’ve discovered that your child’s school is celebrating GLSEN’s No Name-Calling Week, here are some things you might want to be aware of ...

Reading assignments from *The Misfits*, by James Howe

According to GLSEN, its No Name-Calling Week was inspired by this book, which GLSEN lists as a resource for kids as young as third grade. The story features best friends who form a “No-Name” party to influence the school’s student council elections—and at the same time encourage their classmates to stop insulting each other. The plot is creative and some of the characters are engaging. Unfortunately, the positive components are intermixed with liberal and pro-gay messages throughout the book. In fact, there are times when *The Misfits* reads like talking points ripped straight from gay advocacy groups’ press releases.

Below are some excerpts from *The Misfits* that may be of concern to many parents. (Keep in mind this is not an exhaustive review—just enough to give you the basic idea.)

- ◆ One of the book’s heroines refuses to say the Pledge of Allegiance in class: “Well, admittedly, what is *pledged* is allegiance—or loyalty—to one’s country. But isn’t there the implication of a promise of liberty and justice for all? And do we have liberty and justice for all in this country? I think not” (Page 19).
- ◆ Another main character in the book is a gay-identified, seventh-grade student named Joe. Joe is first presented to readers as a four-year-old wearing a dress. “*I never knew a boy who wore a dress,*” I told him. “*There’s a lot you don’t know,*” he said. ... *It wasn’t the last time Joe wore a dress. He kept taking stuff from his mother’s closet and trying it on until his mother finally gave him his own box filled with clothes she was through with and he could dress up to his heart’s content*” (Page 34). Readers are then led along a romantic-suspense storyline about the now middle-school aged Joe, as he discusses his desire to hold hands with another boy and eventually begins his first same-sex dating relationship.

No Name-Calling Week Middle School Level Lesson Plans

GLSEN also provides specific lesson plans to go along with No Name-Calling Week. Some of these lessons will cause concern for parents.

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Here are just a few examples:

- ◆ The “Reflections” lesson plan, for grades 5-9, includes a poem called “I Am the One”, for instance, that touches on sensitive issues like religious beliefs: “I am the one who knows that homosexuality is against God’s will...” Discussion questions for this poem include, “What does it mean to be ‘in the closet?’” and “What can you do to educate yourself about gay and lesbian issues and be an ally to students who are gay and lesbian?”
- ◆ Another lesson plan called “Instant Replay,” for grades 5-7, instructs students to take part in fictional role-playing exercises, such as Scenario #5: “Jose is the son of a lesbian couple who adopted him when he was two years old. Jose never felt that his family was different—his moms always seemed just like any other parents. Lately, though, some of the students at school have been making rude remarks about Jose’s moms...”
- ◆ Likewise, the “Beauty is Skin Deep” lesson—for students as young as fifth grade—contains essays that include this anecdote: “I have lesbian mothers ... Once, when a man realized my mom was gay, he told me I lived in a bad family. When my mom got teary-eyed, Michaela grabbed her hand and told her the man was wrong. She also comes yearly to the Gay Pride parade with my family.”
- ◆ Parents may also have concerns about how educators handle the “What’s in a Name?” lesson, which is recommended for kids as young as seventh grade. It engages students in an in-depth discussion about the meaning of slur words like “b----,” the “n” word and crude terms used as slurs for homosexuals.

As a Christian, I believe our faith requires us to stand up for those who are being bullied or harmed, including people who are ridiculed because they identify as homosexual. I believe the Bible teaches us to defend those who are being physically threatened or emotionally abused, even if we don’t agree with their viewpoint, actions or beliefs. I think that students should be taught that insults and demeaning language are wrong for any reason whatsoever.

However, I also firmly believe that God has given parents the primary responsibility to protect and guard their children—and that this is a right upheld by our Constitution. Our Constitution also guarantees that our religious freedoms will be respected and not violated by government institutions. However, GLSEN’s resources and lessons too often risk violating these principles by crossing the line into pure indoctrination regardless of whether parents like it or not, teaching advocacy for things like gay marriage, same-sex parenting and homosexuality —and encouraging classroom discussions that are obviously designed to undermine socially conservative and faith-based perspectives.

That kind of political agenda does not belong in taxpayer-funded classrooms.