

## Title: It Gets Better

**Grade:** 6-8

Using selected stories from the It Gets Better book, students will explore how to combat homophobic harassment in school.

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Explore gender stereotypes and examine messages we receive about how boys/girls are supposed to act
  - Consider and explore the impact of anti-gay bullying on a student
  - Develop techniques to address anti-gay and gender non-conforming bullying
  - Learn how to make a more welcoming and safer school for all students
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- One session of 50 minutes

### California Health Education Content Standards

- Standard 1 – All students will comprehend essential concepts related to enhancing health
- Standard 2 - All students will demonstrate the ability to analyze internal and external influences that affect health
- Standard 4 – All students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health
- Standard 5 – All students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health
- Standard 6 – All students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health
- Standard 8 – All students will demonstrate the ability to promote and support personal, family and community health.

### Reading

#### Written and Oral English Conventions

- Select reading from It Gets Better book
  - Copy the following story from the It Gets Better book, ensuring there are enough copies for students:
    - “It Gets Better Because You’re a Little Different” by Dave Holmes, Pg. 189-191
- White board/chart paper and marker
- Paper and pencils/pen

- **Anti-Gay Bullying:** Harassment or bullying based on perceived sexual orientation, or gender non-conforming behavior.
- **Bullying (from *It's Elementary*):** Threatening or trying to scare someone with words or actions even though that person did nothing to provoke this behavior.
- **Empathy (from *It's Elementary*):** A feeling of knowing and appreciating what another person is feeling
- **Gay:** A term that can apply to either men or women who are physically and emotionally attracted to persons of the same sex. However, it is usually used to describe men (e.g., "gay men").
- **Gender Non-Conforming (from *It's Elementary*):** A person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- **Gender Role (from *Let's Get Real*):** Societal or cultural expectations about what it means to be a man or a woman.
- **Gender Stereotype (from *Let's Get Real*):** An idea about the way men or women are "supposed" to act, dress, or appear; an assumption about how all girls or boys "should" be.
- **Harass (from *It's Elementary*):** To bother or upset someone repeatedly through words and actions
- **Heterosexual:** A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to a person of the opposite sex.
- **Homophobia:** A fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself.
- **Homosexual:** A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to a person of the same sex.
- **Lesbian:** A term used to describe a woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to another woman.
- **Transgender:** People whose gender identity is different from their birth or biological sex. Sometimes they may hormonally and or/surgically change their bodies to more fully match their gender identity

Introduce the [It Gets Better](#) book to the students.

Briefly explain the development of the It Gets Better project.

As a response to anti-LGBT harassment in school that resulted in suicides of students who were the targets of this bullying, the project intends to send a message to those experiencing a hard time in school to let them know that life can get better. Individuals have posted videos on youtube.com and written messages to let students know that services, resources, and networks exist to support them. No matter how hostile a school environment may feel, a community exists beyond high school to welcome, love, and accept them. This book is a collection of the some of these "It Gets Better" messages.

Explain that the class will read one of these stories, and discuss it.

## **Part One: Reading the Story**

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- Pass out the selected story from the It Gets Better book
  - “It Gets Better Because You’re a Little Different” by Dave Holmes, Pg. 189 - 191
- Give students 10 minutes to read the story.

## **Part Two: Reflections/Discussion**

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### 1. Individual Writing (10 minutes)

Dave recalls that when someone was labeled “gay” it became their whole identity and “there was nothing else important about that person.” Being labeled gay meant that someone wasn’t acknowledged for any other parts of his or her identity (e.g. artist, basketball player, or singer). Those who conformed to gender norms and stereotypes however were not bullied and were acknowledged for many individual traits.

Have students write the answers to the following questions:

- Think for a moment. How many characteristics, or how many qualities would you use to describe yourself?
- How would you feel if you were reduced to only one of those qualities?
- What would you do if you were ridiculed or made fun of for one of those qualities?

### 2. Think/Pair/Share (10 minutes)

Dave felt the pressure to do “what boys do.” Now the class will discuss some stereotypes about what boys/girls do. Have the students get in pairs and discuss these questions:

- What are some stereotypes about what boys do/how boys are supposed to act?
- What are some stereotypes about what girls do/how girls are supposed to act?
- What happens when people don’t fit these expectations?

### 3. Group Discussion/Activity (10 minutes)

**“Act Like a Girl/Boy”** (modified from Let’s Get Real, Pg. 80)

Have students share the stereotypes they listed. Write their ideas on a chart prepared similar to the one below:

Guys and Men ARE or DO:	Girls and Women ARE or DO:
Guys and Men ARE NOT or DO NOT:	Girls and Women ARE NOT or DO NOT:

**Part Three: Closure/Wrap up**

Have the class look at the chart created, and ask the follow questions for class discussion (10 minutes):

- How might these stereotypes affect us?
- What have you seen happen to people your age who don't conform to "the box"?
- Consider if you have ever stepped outside the box.
- What are the benefits, if any, of stepping outside these boxes?
- What can we do to make this school a safer place for students to feel comfortable being themselves whether or not they behave according to these stereotype boxes?

❖ **HEALTH:**

A list of related lessons can be found at [www.healthiersf.org/LGBTQ](http://www.healthiersf.org/LGBTQ) under the “curriculum” tab.

[Investigating Anti-Gay Teasing](#) (pdf)  
[Stereotypes About LGBTQ People](#) (pdf)

Supplemental films to accompany these lesson plans are present at every middle and high school, and SFUSD staff can borrow them from Student Support Services, Quintara site.

- ❖ **Community Based Organizations (CBO):** A list of CBOs which may be used as a resource to supplement health lessons is available on the SSSD website, [www.healthiersf.org](http://www.healthiersf.org), under the Programs and Services tab. Click Health Presenters.