



August 4, 2022

Hello! I am so pleased to have this opportunity to introduce you to HiTOPS, a youth-informed, sexual-health education and support organization serving young people, their families, and youth-serving professionals throughout New Jersey and part of Pennsylvania.

HiTOPS has worked in partnership with school districts and social service organizations for over 35 years, providing affirming, positive, medically accurate, youth-informed services for young people of all identities. Our services and programs are focused on the core areas of:

- Sex Education for middle and high-school aged youth
- Professional Development and Consultation for youth-serving professionals
- Sex Education-related information, resources, and support for families
- LGBTQ+ Social Support Groups
- Summer Programming for LGBTQ+ young people
- Community-based education and advocacy for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults
- The Closet, offering gender-affirming clothing for young people

Our flagship program, **ABC's—Affirming our youth, Building a foundation, Communities** working together—is coming to The River Valley Waldorf School for the 2022-2023 school year. The goal of **ABCs** is to build an affirming school environment for youth and adults of all identities.

ABCs is structured as a collaboration between HiTOPS and everyone in the school community: faculty and staff, students, and parents/guardians. Dr. Stacy Robustelli, the HiTOPS Director of Education, meets three times during the school year with groups of staff and groups of students. Faculty and staff learn what it means to be affirming, how to incorporate affirming practices in the classroom, the implications of a safe and supportive environment for students' health and well-being, and core concepts associated with sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Students learn about the same topics in addition to core sexual health education topics, such as puberty, anatomy, healthy relationships, communication skills, and boundaries and consent. Instruction is provided in a comprehensive, sex positive, developmentally-appropriate and affirming manner.

Parents/guardians are invited to two workshops, when Dr. Robustelli will talk about how to create an affirming home environment, how to talk to children about sexual health related topics, and NJ state laws and policies related to creating affirming, safe school environments.

An important component of our work together is to incorporate feedback from staff, students and parents/guardians via responses to the surveys we'll be distributing at the beginning of our partnership and again at the end of the year. Surveys are 20 items in length and are voluntary

and anonymous. We use a data collection software program that is protected to ensure accuracy and privacy. Questions are focused on sexual-health related content knowledge, perceptions of safety and belonging in the school, and perceptions of teacher and student support. Each year the data is analyzed for trends, changes and used to inform future programming.

The goal of our collaboration is to walk alongside you all year long, so that together we can navigate these complex and very relevant topics. I want to emphasize that we are here to answer your questions, to have the difficult conversations, and to support you!

We are looking forward to our collaboration. Please feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions or insights you'd like to share.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Shelby". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the text "Best regards,".

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