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WITH VIDEO: Ann Arbor teenager Graeme Taylor awarded \$10,000 scholarship on Ellen DeGeneres show

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Graeme Taylor was [thrust into the national spotlight](#) last week when the openly gay **Ann Arbor** teenager gave a moving speech to the Howell school board.

But it wasn't something he rehearsed, the Pioneer High student [told Ellen DeGeneres on her show](#) Monday.

After hearing the story of Howell teacher **Jay McDowell**, who was suspended for a day without pay after he ejected two students from his classroom on Oct. 20 for what he judged to be anti-gay remarks, Taylor and others from the Neutral Zone drove to the school board meeting.

"I began to speak and slowly just thought of anyone who has been tormented or had such a hard life, and the rest just came out," Taylor told DeGeneres.

Taylor also discussed self-acceptance, telling DeGeneres: "It takes time to get comfortable with yourself."

"Yeah, I know," DeGeneres, who is openly gay, quipped back.

And Taylor, 14, told the story of revealing to two friends he is gay at the age of 13. He said he felt he needed to tell them, got flustered and walked into a closet.

As he emerged, he announced, "Guys, I'm gay," without really thinking about it. I literally came out of the closet."

At the end of the nearly four-minute segment, DeGeneres presented Taylor with a \$10,000 scholarship from [tonic.com](#). [An article](#) on the tonic.com website explains, "Ellen called and we proudly stepped up again. Our latest campaign not only supports a courageous, young anti-bullying advocate, but has also inspired us to make Tonic Campaigns a regular occurrence."

Meanwhile, the controversy continues in Howell.

The district [last Wednesday released statements](#) from students who said McDowell was the one who ignited the situation in his classroom and yelled at the students, called them racist and slammed doors. McDowell denied those allegations.

The Howell Public Schools teachers union [released a statement Thursday](#) criticizing the school board and district officials for what it called inaccuracies and character attacks on McDowell.



Ann Arbor Pioneer student Graeme Taylor appeared on the Ellen DeGeneres show Monday.



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