

OUR FAMILY!

Film Lesson Guide

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A project of
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WELCOMING SCHOOLS



Working together to build safe, inclusive, and accepting school and communities.

OUR FAMILY!



Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION: Film Background and Synopsis 3**
 - Synopsis 3
 - How to Use this Film and Guide 4
- VIEWING THE FILM: Previewing, Viewing, and Post-viewing 5**
 - Discussion Ideas and Activities 5
 - Previewing 5
 - Viewing 6
 - Pause Guide 6
 - Post-Viewing Discussion and Questions 8
 - Questions for K- 5th Grade 8
- EXTENSION ACTIVITIES: Extending the Impact of the Film 9**
 - Activities For All students 9
 - Activities Grades K-2 9
 - Activities Grades 3-5. 9
 - Student-led Family Diversity Extravaganza 10
 - Facilitating Conversations about Diverse Families 11
 - Creating an Identity Safe School Climate 12
 - Ideas for Creating a Welcoming, Identity Safe Classroom and School 13
 - Student/Family Interactions 13
 - School and District Training and Policies 13
 - Sharing the Family Diversity Film and Message with
 - Parents/Caregivers 14
 - Overcoming Resistance 14
 - Showing the Film at Family Education Workshops. 14
 - Share Synopsis of the film with families:. 15
- CONCLUSION. 15**
- APPENDIX A. 16**
 - Learning Standards. 16
 - Common Core State Standards 16
 - Health Standards 16
 - Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies 17
- APPENDIX B. 18**
 - Sample Letter to Families about the Film 18
- APPENDIX C: Welcoming Schools Family Diversity Tools and Lessons. 19**
 - Welcoming Schools Glossary of Definitions 20
 - Welcoming Schools Bibliography of Books on Family Diversity 20
 - Family Diversity Lesson Plans 21

Introduction

FILM BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS

Families in the United States today come in many different types and sizes, yet children can go through their entire elementary school years without seeing the rich diversity of families around them and only learning about the stereotypical family configuration: two parents/caregivers of the same background and children under one roof. Yet that is not the reality for a large number of children in the United States. The reality of today is that America's children come from families living in one home or two, being raised by two parents/caregivers, one mother, or one father, or by grandparents. Some have parents/caregivers of different ethnic backgrounds, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Others have some family members who are incarcerated, while some have parents who passed away or who live in different countries. Some families have adopted children, transgender children or family members with disabilities. Many have an extended family living under one roof. Most families have so many things in common, yet they are also unique and special in their own ways. As children grow up, they need to see, hear, and learn about people like themselves and also learn about others who might be different from them. They need to feel that their families are welcomed and accepted just as they are and that their family type is reflected in the curriculum and world of schooling. This film seeks to offer students a chance to see and talk about some of these many different family configurations.

The film has a clear purpose: to show children in grades K-5 that there are many kinds of families, to help them appreciate their own family configuration, and to be open to those who are different from them. The film and activities are also designed to open a conversation, to encourage constructive dialogue, and to give children the opportunity to share about their own families in a supportive and accepting way.

Synopsis *This film showcases students in grades K-5 and their families sharing about their concept of what family means to them. We meet many kinds of families: large and small families, multigenerational families, families with a mom and a dad, a single dad or mom, two moms or two dads. The film also shows adopted children, families who speak a language other than English, and families with two parents/caregivers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Family members share what is special about each other, moments of struggle, and above all express love for one another. The film also shows school events and celebrations with all the diverse families having fun together. The film closes with the wise words of young Nathan, who says, "It is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families in a school so you know how to include everyone... you don't just go to the people who are like you, you reach out and embrace everyone."*



HOW TO USE THIS FILM AND GUIDE

This guide is designed to support you and other educators who will be showing the family diversity film in grades K-5 classrooms and as part of family education sessions. The guide offers pre- and post-viewing questioning strategies, discussion prompts, and extension activities. Since this film aims to reach children at a range of developmental levels and in communities with greater or lesser exposure to the many types of family differences, teachers can customize the lessons to fit their particular context. This lesson guide also includes a “pause guide” with key moments that you as a teacher can use to stop the film and ask questions, to find out what the students are thinking and feeling, to teach relevant vocabulary, and to add to the students’ knowledge base.

This film has many curricular connections with the areas of language arts, health, and social sciences as students learn about themselves and the world around them. The learning goals for viewing, discussing, and engaging in extended activities include many Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies as well as opportunities to meet Common Core State Standards in English, Language Arts, and aspects of Health Standards which are different in each state. This is outlined in the Appendix.

This guide is designed to provide a menu of options for educators to prepare students for viewing the film together and to respond to the film in discussion or in writing. The guide also offers a variety of engaging activities to extend learning. You can select activities based on student needs, grade level, school environment, or the local community.

A glossary has been provided in the Appendix to allow schools to select terms that need further definition for the discussions with students, parents, and/or staff. The glossary will allow you to select the words from the list that are grade-level appropriate to educate your school community in language that facilitates open dialogue on family diversity.

Viewing the Film

Previewing, Viewing, and Post-viewing: Discussion Ideas and Activities

PREVIEWING Discussion Ideas and Activities

When laying the groundwork for viewing the film, consider your students and their families. Open the conversation with simple questions to draw out differences that several children in the class can relate to:

“Do any of you have people in your families who speak another language?”

“Do any of you have grandparents living at your house?”

You may also choose to front-load the film to prepare students for what they might see:

“We will be seeing a film about families. You will see parents/ caregivers and children talking about their families. Some will be with their grandparents, some will be speaking two languages, some will have two moms who are married to each other.... After, we can talk about the film and everything you saw. Watch carefully to see if any of the families are like yours. I will be asking.”

You may also begin with having them do a quick-write to explore their ideas about families and share about their own families:

- What is a family?
- What is special about my family?
- Why is it important to learn about different types of families?

Also, you could have students work in partners or small groups and talk about different kinds of families:

- Define “family.”
- Who is in your family?
- What is something that your family loves to do? Tell us something special about your family.

From the glossary of vocabulary words in the Appendix, select words that are grade-level appropriate for your students to enhance their understanding.

VIEWING You may choose to show the film once or show it twice with discussion time in between. You may also choose to pause the film while showing it in order to ask clarifying questions or provide additional things to think about. If you have students in the class with unique situations like having two moms, be careful not to put that student on the spot. Don't ask the child what it is like to have two moms or two dads. As one girl put it, "Kids are always asking me what it's like to have two dads. I don't get it. It is just like having a mom and dad." Always leave space for the children to share from their experiences if they so desire. That is also true of any of the other types of families, students who are adopted, in mixed heritage families etc. However, for less stigmatized topics (multigenerational or multilingual families, for example), feel free to ask them to share.

PAUSE GUIDE

Stop the film at [1:06] Ask the students, "What do they mean by 'double the mommies'?" Ask students if they have ever met a kid with two moms or two dads. Be prepared to provide age appropriate definitions of 'lesbian' and 'gay' (see Appendix).

Stop the film at [1:24] Talk about the many ways that families can live in different houses or live with one parent/caregiver or a blended family. Explain that every family has differences and that whether the parents/caregivers are single parents, married, divorced, or remarried, they can be close and loving.

Stop the film at [2:11] Ask "What does Hannah's mother mean when she says that her husband has faced physical challenges?" Have the students identify different kinds of struggles that families may face. Ask students to reflect on how families stick together in sickness and health and through good and bad times.

Stop the film at [3:32] Ask the students what they think about the story Gigi wrote with the character that says "I'm a girl, I'm a girl, I'm a girl, but sometimes, I'm a boy." This offers an opportunity to talk about accepting people who do not fit gender stereotypes. Tell them that sometimes people are born into a girl's body and feel more like a boy or vice versa, and that some want to be the other gender while others feel like they want to be both. Explain that some children are



transgender, and tell them the definition (see Appendix). Make it clear that wanting to play, do activities, or dress in a way that is generally associated with another gender does not make a child transgender (for example, a boy who was born as a boy who plays with dolls is not necessarily transgender).

Stop the film at [3:36] Ask the students what they think about the comment by Gigi that there are “no girl things or boy things”. Ask them whether they agree with that statement and why. Ask what are some of the things they like to do. Nowadays, boys and girls are able to do many more things and not stick to being told who to be or what to feel like. Explain that for a long, time girls and boys were told what to like (boys like trucks and girls like dolls). This can lead to a great conversation about gender roles and stereotypes.

Stop the film at [4:39] Tell the kids that throughout history, our diversity has helped make humans into very intelligent and creative people. Talk about the different ways families can be mixed. Provide the definitions for ‘mixed heritage’ and ‘interfaith’ from the glossary (see Appendix). Ask them about differences in their families. Again, do not put mixed heritage students on the spot. Also, explain to the students that there are many ways children get adopted. Some have contact with their birth parents/caregivers, and others do not.

Stop the film at [5:52] Ask students about multigenerational families. Have them tell about their grandparents/caregivers and elderly aunts and uncles. Have them share some of the things they have learned from the elder members of their family.

Stop the film at [5:27] Ask students why they they think that Jacqueline’s mother wants her to keep her Spanish language and culture. Talk about the different languages that families speak. Ask the students what languages they have in their families. Also, ask students to explain ways they are preserving their cultures in their families.

Stop the film at [6:49] At the end of the film, Nathan says, “It is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families in a school so you know how to include everyone... you don’t just go to the people who are like you, you reach out and embrace everyone.” What do you think he means? Why do you think it is important to get to know everyone, not just people who are like you?

What are some of the words that the students in the film used to talk about their families? What are some of the things that they like to do? Are any of these the same as the words you used to describe your family (refer back to pre-film activity)?

**POST-VIEWING
DISCUSSION AND
QUESTIONS**

To prepare for the post-viewing discussion, be sure to consider the families of students in your classroom, that way you can tailor discussion to your students. Do you have students with gay or lesbian parents? Are there any adopted children, or other distinct family situations in your classroom? Do you have a child whose parents/caregivers are going through a divorce, a child who has had a parent die, or a parent who is incarcerated (in jail)? Make sure your questions do not leave that child out of the conversation. For example, if you have foster children in your classroom, talk about parents/caregivers and guardians. Also, be careful not to single out a child in a way that makes her feel uncomfortable. Ask your questions in open-ended ways that reflect your classroom and do not make assumptions. If you have Muslim or Jewish children, Jehovah's Witnesses, or atheists, do not ask how they celebrate Christmas, but rather: "What celebrations do you look forward to?"

As careful as you may be, you may inadvertently make mistakes. Acknowledge the mistakes- it models for children that everyone makes mistakes.



**QUESTIONS FOR
K- 5TH GRADE**

What are the similarities among families in the film, and what are the differences?

Did you see any families like your family?

- Did you see any families that are like families of your friends?
- Did you see any kids who were like you? Why?
- How does having different kinds of families make our school and community better for everybody?
- What differences did you notice between your family and some of the families in the film?
- What did you notice that was the same about all of the families in the video?
- Did any of your thinking about what a family is change?

Extension Activities

Extending the Impact of the Film

The power of the film will be stronger with extension activities that encourage students to reflect on their families and the families of others at their school. Below are simple classroom and school wide activities that can be done after viewing the film.

Activities for All Students

1. Write about your family with prompts.
2. Invite family members to come to school to share family stories.
3. Make a class family tree or orchard with photos and drawings.
4. Read to students about families in another part of the world, and make a family collage, noticing what's alike and what is different.
5. Have students write on a post-it note one thing why they feel that makes their own family special or different. Post the notes on a chart in the front of the class, and decorate the chart.
6. Organize a family science or math night where students and family members come together to do activities.

Activities Grades K-2

1. Have students draw members of their family and write about them.
2. Make a class family book.
3. Give students magazines. Identify pictures of families, and make a class collage or table collages of different families.
4. Make a graph of things they like to do with their families.
5. Talk about the many different ways families celebrate holidays. Have them learn from each other and share their family's cultural holiday traditions with each other.
6. Paint family portraits. Then post them to make a gallery. Do a gallery walk where students share their portraits and tell about their families.

Activities Grades 3-5

1. Have students interview members of their family, and share the interviews with the class.
2. Have students interview each other or students from another class about their family background.
3. Have students write "I am from" poems about their family backgrounds.
4. Have students make a family quilt with each child making a family square out of paper or cloth.
5. Have students research their family history and make posters to share with the class.
6. Have students play a family activity bingo game and find others in the class (create the game based on what you know about the class). Find someone who:
 - a. has extended family in another country.
 - b. likes to go camping with their family.
 - c. has someone in the family who plays a musical instrument.

7. Talk in class about what makes different families similar and different, and how it might feel when a student's family seems different from others. Brainstorm ideas of what students can do if they're feeling self-conscious or excluded because of something about their family.
8. Make a family mandala with images of things that are important to their family.

**Student-Led
Family Diversity
Extravaganza**

The *Family Diversity Extravaganza* is an activity that brings the families of the school together for an event designed to celebrate the diversity of families at the school. Designing, planning, and organizing a student-led Family Diversity Extravaganza is a great way for students to put the principles from the film about family diversity into action. It will help the students think about ways to include the whole school and celebrate all of their families. The following nine-step process can be planned, led, and organized by a student council, a newly formed student club, or even one classroom of the school.



1. First, share the film with the staff, and hold a discussion about the advantages of having a school wide, student-led family diversity event.
2. Select staff leaders. Invite all classroom teachers to share the film and to prepare their students to participate in the extravaganza with in-class activities about families. Artwork from the in-class activities can be used to decorate the auditorium.
3. Identify a student leadership group with students from diverse backgrounds and family constellations that will meet to plan the Family Diversity Extravaganza.
4. Have student leaders view the film, discuss it, and brainstorm ways the school could bring all the families together to celebrate family diversity at the school.
5. Have student leaders design, plan, and execute the school wide extravaganza that could include inventing their own activity or selecting and adapting one of the ideas below.
 - A school fair where each class creates a booth that highlights students sharing stories from their families.

- An enormous school family tree or orchard where all students bring or draw a picture of their family. Then hold a celebration of families to view the tree and or add to it.
 - An assembly or evening event where students share special songs, dances, and other traditions from their families.
 - A school-wide dance festival where students and their families teach each other songs and dances.
 - A family stories event with different students and their families sharing their stories.
6. Have student leaders select a format, and fill in the details of the Family Extravaganza Event. Then organize and plan it. Make a task list and timeline. Assign roles and responsibilities. Have regular check-ins.
 7. Have the staff leaders identify books and classroom activities to learn more about their own and each other's families. This will help classrooms get motivated and excited about the extravaganza. See the link to a resource list from Welcoming Schools in the appendix for ideas.
 8. Take pictures of the families together at the event to post around the school.
 9. Have student leaders and staff evaluate effectiveness. Consider making it a tradition.

**FACILITATING
CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT DIVERSE
FAMILIES**

1. Create simple ground rules about how to talk about families. Highlight and review the norms or class rules about respect that you already have at your school.
2. Talk with students about not making fun of any student's family.
3. Begin with open-ended questions. E.g.: What do you think we can learn from our families?
4. Be careful not to put children on the spot by saying something like "Chen, you were adopted. Why don't you tell everyone about it."
5. Provide prompts for partners to do a "Pair Share" to give all students a chance to speak.
6. Pay attention to any students who might have unique circumstances that make them vulnerable, such as foster children or a child with some personal family issues. Talk to that child privately to check in on feelings.



**CREATING AN
IDENTITY SAFE
SCHOOL CLIMATE**

A child's personal identity develops in the context of his or her family. Therefore, a school environment that ignores a student's identity, background, and family cannot be safe for anyone, particularly children from a negatively stereotyped group.

When individuals must function in an environment where their identities are not respectfully acknowledged —when negative stereotypes are used to define them, or when they feel invisible—many young people give up or hide parts of themselves to be accepted. Imagine hiding your family from your peers and from the school because you are ashamed that they don't match the perceived "ideal" families seen on TV. By understanding the concept of identity safety, educators can help students feel secure in their identities, free to be who they are, and thrive at school.

Learning is a social process that depends on fostering positive relationships so students feel safe to engage fully in school. Cognitive development cannot occur and flourish unless the social nature of learning is addressed in every aspect of school. A negative social environment distracts from learning as students worry about their competence and sense of belonging.

Identity safe classrooms are those in which teachers strive to ensure students that their social identities are an asset rather than a barrier to success in the classroom. Students feel they are welcomed, supported, and valued as members of the learning community. (Identity Safe Classrooms: Places to Belong and Learn, Cohn-Vargas, Steele 2013)

This film, the related conversations, and the included activities help to create awareness that builds understanding, acceptance, and empathy about the many types of families. The discussions will additionally help contribute to a student's feeling of safety and belonging. No matter what differences they might have, differences are not stigmatized.

To prepare for using the film, it is important to build trust and create an identity safe space. These are spaces where students feel they can trust the teacher and one another while expressing their feelings without criticism or ridicule.

However, identity safety can only occur in the overall context of a classroom climate of respect. The film is only one aspect of creating that sense of value and belonging. It must be accompanied by a comprehensive school wide effort to create an identity safe climate and culture. Identity safe classrooms are spaces where relationships are valued, student voices are heard, and children learn positive social skills. They learn how to help and cooperate with one another in an environment that fosters high expectations, offers challenging curriculum, and where student diversity is cultivated as a resource for learning.

Ideas for Creating a Welcoming, Identity Safe Classroom and School

**Student/
Family Interactions**

1. Learn what children call each of their parents/caregivers; use that language when referring to their families.
2. Learn how families talk about their family structure, including how it was formed.
3. Never “out” a student as having LGBTQ parents/caregivers unless they share this themselves.
4. Address family diversity, gender roles, stereotyping, and bullying on a regular basis.
5. Include a special unit to directly address bias, stereotyping, and bullying.
6. Conduct a student survey on bullying and teasing to get a sense of what kids see, hear, and feel.
7. Have representational materials in the classroom and common areas: posters, books, etc.
8. Include appropriate examples of diverse family structures (e.g., two moms, grandparents, single dad, adopted) in classroom examples, math word problems, etc. throughout the curriculum.
9. Create activities such as “Family Day” (instead of Mothers/Fathers Day), that are more inclusive for children with LGBTQ parents, single parents, or guardians in foster care.

School and District Training and Policies

- Have staff development training for all staff (including afterschool teachers) that provides tools to teach inclusive curriculum, assure safe and accepting environments, and answer questions.
- Make school forms and communications to families inclusive of gender neutral language: For example, “Dear families and/or parent/guardian” instead of “mother/father”.
- Develop a robust anti-bias/anti-bullying policy that is a part of the school culture, specifically naming sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity as protected groups.
- Ensure the school district has procedures in place to address complaints of harassment/bullying, should they occur.
- Ensure parents/caregivers and students are aware of procedures for addressing complaints of harassment/bullying.



**SHARING THE
FAMILY DIVERSITY
FILM AND MESSAGE
WITH PARENTS/
CAREGIVERS**

In the process of creating a safe environment for students, a clear message needs to be shared with parents/caregivers. The message should assure them that this school is made up of all kinds of families, and we want all students and families to feel welcome and safe. You can explain that showing the film, having conversations, reading literature, and bringing families into the school is a way to open dialogue and build bridges across differences. Combining the showing of this film with other efforts to help families get to know each other will strengthen the sense of belonging for children and adults. How to do this depends on your school's culture and history.

**Overcoming
Resistance**

You may encounter resistance. Some parents/caregivers may overtly question why you are presenting curriculum on family diversity, and will challenge you, objecting subtly or not so subtly. Some will protest that you are mentioning the word gay at an elementary school, saying children are too young to learn about sex. A response to that concern is that the family diversity curriculum and talking about children with LGBTQ parents/caregivers is not talking about sex. It is no different from talking about any heterosexual parents. Become aware of and be sure to check your local anti-discrimination laws and policies as well as your State Education Code to backup your response. Many schools are out of compliance when they are not representing all families in respectful and non-stereotypical ways.

In other cases, a negative reaction may be veiled. Parents/caregivers may object to highlighting differences at all, saying that children are naturally not prejudiced and that naming differences will create prejudice. That is also the argument of those who say "I don't see color, I treat everyone the same." A way to respond is to highlight how differences may be unspoken, but are clearly felt by anyone who does not fit into stereotypes about race, ethnicity, gender, and other differences. Ask parents/caregivers to imagine how an adopted child might feel going through six years of schooling and thinking that she is the only one. Or have them consider a child with two moms, who might worry about being judged by peers because he has never seen or heard about another family like his.

Creating empathy and acceptance is an ongoing process with many bumps and challenges along the way. This film aims to provide a natural jumping off point to open these conversations safely and kindly. By showing the film to parents/caregivers, the whole community will enter into dialogue and come to understand the importance of authentically embracing the diversity around them.

**Showing the Film
at Family Education
Workshops**

This film can also be used as part of family education. The Spanish translation of the film can be accessed on YouTube by clicking CC on the right hand side on the bottom.

Share Synopsis of the film with families

Previewing: Before you show the film, have partners answer these questions and share out with the group.

- What do you remember being taught about different kinds of families when you were a child?
- Do you remember seeing your family structure represented in books, lesson plans, classroom visuals, and conversations? How did you feel about seeing/not seeing your family represented?



This film showcases students in grades K-5 and their families sharing about their concept of what family means to them. We meet many kinds of families: large and small families, multigenerational families, families with a mom and a dad, a single dad or mom, two moms or two dads. The film also shows adopted children, families who speak a language other than English, and families with two parents/caregivers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Family members share what is special about each other, moments of struggle, and above all express love for one another. The film also shows school events and celebrations with all the diverse families having fun together. The film closes with the wise words of young Nathan, who says, “It is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families in a school so you know how to include everyone... you don’t just go to the people who are like you, you reach out and embrace everyone.”

Post-viewing: Follow up questions after viewing the film:

- What do you think your children will learn from this film?
- What questions could you ask your children at home to continue the conversation about respecting all families?
- What are your thoughts or questions about this film?

Conclusion

Children who have viewed this film, overwhelmingly share that they feel the film conveys a sense that families are about loving, sharing, struggling, and helping each other. They appreciated the genuine expressions of the children and parents/caregivers in the film when we interviewed them. We close with the words of Nathan, age nine: “It is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families at a school so that you know how to include everyone, and so you know how you don’t just go to the people that are like you. You reach out and embrace everybody.”

Appendix A

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts include grade level standards for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This film and lessons incorporate the following types of literacy that include higher level thinking about the many kinds of families in their classroom, school, and world around them. The activities in this guide include:

1. Writing activities
2. Research
3. Discussions to build speaking and listening skills

Health Standards

Each state has developed its own set of health standards. State Health Standards incorporate awareness and skills related to families. The film and accompanying discussions and activities can address many of these State Health Standards. Many states in the US have similar standards that include some or all of the following skills in relation to families:

Grades K-2

- Develop interpersonal communication skills
- Initiate family conversations about health
- Identify the characteristics of families and roles of family members
- Understand cultural differences and traditions of families
- Learn to communicate and express feelings of love to family members

Grades 3-5

- Develop ways to communicate with family members about important issues
- Understand cultural differences in families
- Be able to describe a variety of family structures (e.g. two parent, single parent, blended, extended, foster, and adopted) and how they change over time
- Describe how families show love for each other and how changes within the family influence emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, guilt, fear, etc. (e.g. birth, divorce, death, marriage)

**SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL
LEARNING (SEL)
COMPETENCIES**

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has developed competencies that include critical skills for young people to develop as they grow into adulthood. The film together with accompanying lessons aids in the developing the following competencies.



Self-awareness: The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts about themselves in relation to their own families. This film supports students in gaining a sense of identity safety, confidence, and optimism.

Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with peers and families, appreciating similarities and differences with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This film highlights appreciating diverse families of all kinds.

Relationship skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and positive relationships with peers and families of all backgrounds. This includes getting along, working cooperatively, sharing ideas listening actively, and learning from their classmates. This film models positive relationships among families and activities to strengthen relationships in the school.

Responsible decision making: The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others. This film encourages students to be accepting as part of making respectful choices.

Appendix B

SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES ABOUT THE FILM

Dear Families,

We are going to watch/watched this exciting new film about all kinds of different family formations in our class. The film is called OUR FAMILY, and you can watch it at home by clicking on this link: _____

Some questions you can ask your children after you watch the film together are:

- What is special about our family?
- Can you tell me about a family that is really different from ours?
- Why is it important to learn about different families?

Please review the synopsis of the film below and let us know if you have any questions. Our goal is to be sure all families are valued and respected in our school community and keep the conversations going at home and at school.

Sincerely,

Synopsis: OUR FAMILY

This film showcases students in grades K-5 and their families sharing about their concept of what family means to them. We meet many kinds of families: large and small families, multigenerational families, families with a mom and a dad, a single dad or mom, two moms or two dads. The film also shows adopted children, families who speak a language other than English, and families with two parents/caregivers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Family members share what is special about each other, moments of struggle, and above all express love for one another. The film also shows school events and celebrations with all the diverse families having fun together. The film closes with the wise words of young Nathan, who says "it is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families in a school so you know how to include everyone... you don't just go to the people who are like you, you reach out and embrace everyone."

Appendix C

WELCOMING SCHOOLS FAMILY DIVERSITY TOOLS AND LESSONS

GLOSSARY Adapted from Welcoming Schools

ADOPTION: When adults bring children into their families and legally become the parents.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS: The parents of children who have joined the family through adoption.

BIRTH MOTHER: The woman who gave birth to a child.

BIRTH FATHER: The man who helped to create a baby with the birth mother.

BISEXUAL: describes a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to men and women.

BLENDED FAMILY: Two families who come together to form a new family.

DIVORCE: When people legally separate and end a marriage.

EXTENDED FAMILY: All of your relatives, including your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. In some families this includes “aunties,” godparents, household members and other designated/special people who are not biologically related to each other.

FOSTER PARENT: A person who has the responsibility of the temporary care of a child who is not currently living with his or her permanent family. Sometimes foster parents/caregivers go on to become adoptive parents/caregivers or guardians.

GAY: often, but not always, used to describe men who are physically and emotionally attracted to other men; sometimes used by women who are attracted to other women or as an umbrella term to describe same-sex relationships.

LESBIAN: describes a woman who is physically and emotionally attracted to other women.

LGBT-HEADED FAMILY: A family where the parents/caregivers are/is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The caring adults could also be guardians or grandparents/caregivers who are LGBT.

GUARDIAN: A person who has responsibility by law to care for a child;

a person other than the biological parent who takes care of a child. The person may be biologically related to the child, such as a grandparent.

INTERFAITH FAMILY: When people of different religious backgrounds are part of the same family. For example, if one parent is Christian and the other is Jewish. Some families choose to raise their children primarily as one faith while some choose to expose their children to both faiths. In some families where the parents/caregivers come from different religious backgrounds, one parent will choose to convert to their partner's religion. In some families each parent will continue to practice his or her own faith.

INTERRACIAL FAMILY: When people of different racial backgrounds form a family through marriage or through a committed relationship.

MIXED FAMILY: When people of different racial backgrounds are part of the same family. People of different ethnic, religious or national backgrounds can also form families who are "mixed" in terms of culture, skin color, language and/or religious practices.

MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY: When a family includes different generations living together — children, parents/caregivers or aunts and uncles and grandparents.

MULTIRACIAL FAMILY: When people of different racial backgrounds are part of the same family.

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY: A family in which one parent raises the child or children.

STEPBROTHER or STEPSISTER: If a divorced or single parent marries a new person and that person already has children, those children become stepbrothers and stepsisters.

STEPPARENT: When a divorced or single parent marries a new person or has a committed relationship with a new partner, the new partner becomes a stepparent to the children. Also, **STEPMOTHER** or **STEPFATHER**.

TRANSGENDER: describes a person whose assigned gender at birth is different from who they know they are on the inside.

**WELCOMING
SCHOOLS
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
BOOKS ON FAMILY
DIVERSITY**

Books for Children

- [\[PDF\]http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Children_Families_Immigration_Books.pdf](http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Children_Families_Immigration_Books.pdf)

Books for Educators and parents/caregivers

- <http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/Welcoming-Schools-Bibliography-for-Educators-and-Parents1.pdf>

**FAMILY DIVERSITY
LESSON PLANS**

TWO FAMILY DIVERSITY LESSON PLANS
FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

More lessons can be downloaded at www.welcomingschools.org

**Welcoming Schools
Lesson One**

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 3

LENGTH OF TIME: One session of 45 minutes

- Goals
- To use literature to explore the diversity of families.
 - Students will see that the common bond that holds all kinds of healthy families together is love and caring.
- Objectives
- Students will be able to define what makes a family and describe a variety of families.
 - Students will be able to identify common characteristics within all families.
 - Students will learn that families have some similarities and some differences.
- Academic Standards
- CCSS RL.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. Also RL K.1, 2.1, 3.1.
 - CCSS SL 2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. Also SL K.1, 1.1, 3.1.
 - Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – Exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups are alike and how they are unique.
- Educators' Notes
- *What Is a Family?* is an introductory session focusing on students' own experiences and questions. It includes a discussion of a book on families: *The Family Book* by Todd Parr or *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman (for younger students) and *Families* by Susan Kuklin or *All Families Are Special* by Norma Simon (for older students). This unit is good to use as part of a larger curriculum sequence on family.
 - In this lesson, it is important to broaden students' understanding of what families are and to explore the notion that the common bond that holds all healthy families together is "love" (and caregiving). Students will brainstorm and discuss family structure and diversity. Students will also share information from their own experiences.
 - If there are students with different family configurations in your class or school, such as families with two moms or two dads; stepparents; a transgender parent; adoptive parents; or foster parents, it is useful to find out the language they use to refer to their families to help answer questions that may arise. If there is only one such student in your school, be careful not to continually single him or her out as an example.

Materials Chart paper and markers.

- Suggested Books
- *The Family Book*, Todd Parr. (Pre-K - K)
 - *The Great Big Book of Families*, Mary Hoffman. (K - 3)
 - *All Families Are Special*, Norma Simon. (2 - 3)
 - *Who's In My Family?: All About Our Families*, Robie Harris. (PreK - 1)
 - *Dear Child*, John Farrel (Pre-K - K) Families, Susan Kuklin. (3 - 5)

Have available in the classroom or visit the library to see books with diverse families.

Activity 1 Label a piece of chart paper "What do we know about families?" Ask the class the following questions and record their answers on chart paper.

- What do we know about families?
- Who is in a family?
- What do family members give or share with each other?
- What responsibilities do family members have?
- Families can be defined in many ways. Each one is unique. Most fall into a category or group of families that children can define. Familiarize students with the terms (see Family Definitions) used to describe different family models. Make sure to include all the different kinds of families that are in your classroom. At the same time, it is important to name a wide variety of families (such as single parents/caregivers or LGBT-headed), especially the ones that are not represented in your classroom.
- For younger students you can draw picture symbols or use magazine cut-outs of each family member next to each family model. For example, for "extended family," draw grandparent(s), parent(s) and children. It is also important for children to define for themselves who is in their family. Their description may include a pet, a church member, a neighbor or someone else.

Activity 2 Read one of the suggested books, depending on grade level.

- As you read the book, ask children to watch for these different kinds of families: "Let's see how many different kinds of families we can find in this book."
- As you read, pause and ask, "What do you see in this picture? Who's in this family?" At the end of the book you might say, "Are these all the kinds of families that there can be?"
- End the lesson by asking, "What is important in all families? What makes a family?"

- Extensions
 - Give students a sheet of unlined paper. Have them fold it in half. Have them draw two different kinds of families doing something together. Have them title each picture and indicate which kind of family is illustrated in each and what they are doing.
 - Older students can write a poem about what “family” means to them or what is important about families.
- Assessment and Evaluation
 - Are all students participating in the discussion?
 - Can students name two things that they think are important about healthy families?

Welcoming Schools HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FAMILIES REINFORCED?
Lesson Two SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 4 - 6
 LENGTH OF TIME: 60 - 90 minutes

- Goals
 - Students will explore their understanding of what makes a family.
 - Students will develop a greater understanding of family diversity.
 - Students will understand how assumptions are learned and reinforced.
- Objectives
 - Students will be able to identify the difference between assumptions about families and real families they see and know.
 - Students will be able to name where people learn assumptions about families, race, gender and sexual orientation and be able to discuss the harmful effects of making assumptions.
 - Students will be able to create strategies for creating a more inclusive school.
- Academic Achievement
 - CCSS SL 4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly. Also SL 5.1, 6.1.
 - Social Studies Strand 1: Culture – Learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others.
- Educators’ Notes
 - In this lesson students will brainstorm their ideas about families. They then can look at books on diverse families or watch the film That’s a Family! Afterward they will return to their list, deciding which ideas were assumptions and how what they saw in the books or film challenged those assumptions. Students then discuss how the assumptions about families are learned and reinforced.

- Materials Different? / Similar? / I Wonder? worksheet, Stereotype Reinforcement worksheet. One copy of each worksheet per student, or a PowerPoint slide of each worksheet (available at www.welcomingschools.org).
- Suggested Books or Film
- *That's a Family!* Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen, Women's Educational Media, DVD, 2000 (30 minutes). Available at: www.groundspark.org.
 - "In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families," Gigi Kaeser (Photographer), Peggy Gillespie & Rebekah Boyd (Interviewers). Available at: www.familydiv.org.
 - *Love Makes a Family: Portraits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender parent/caregivers/caregivers and Their Families*, Gigi Kaeser & Peggy Gillespie. Available at: www.familydiv.org.
 - *Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*, Gigi Kaeser & Peggy Gillespie.
 - *Families*, Susan Kuklin.
- Activity
- Invite students to brainstorm a list of qualities that are true of all families. On the board, record their ideas, without editing or commenting. Students will offer ideas, such as, "They have a mother and a father."
 - Ask the students to review the books on diverse. The Different? / Similar? / I Wonder? worksheet can be used to guide them.
 - Facilitate a discussion based on the books or film and the list the students had brainstormed previously about families.
 - Ask students: Which qualities on the list do you still agree with, and which are really assumptions about families?
 - Circle the assumptions on the list, asking students for specific examples of families that challenge the assumption, either from the exhibit or from their own lives. The list may be considerably shorter after this discussion, with perhaps only one or two qualities remaining, such as, "They do things together," or, "They love each other." Reassure students that most adults doing this activity would probably generate a similar list with many assumptions. We have all learned these assumptions.
 - Ask students where people learn these assumptions about families. Brainstorm another list on the board, including TV, movies and videos, cereal boxes, etc. Offer a framework for understanding the reinforcement of assumptions. Either distribute copies of the Stereotype Reinforcement worksheet or project a transparency of the same worksheet onto a screen.
 - Prompt a conversation with students about the harmful effects of making assumptions by asking, "Some of you may come from families who are different from or the same as the assumptions or stereotypes about families. Let's talk about how it feels to be placed in either one of these categories." This gives all children in the group the opportunity to discuss feelings about assumptions

and may lead to a conclusion that actually all families are different in some ways and alike in others.

- Ask students to talk about how they feel about being stereotyped. You might ask, “Do you think that stereotypes really describe anyone’s family exactly as they are? How do you think it feels to someone to have his or her family excluded from the conversations of families? Can you think of ways that this happens in situations like schools, TV, books and other places? Can you think of ways this might be harmful?”
- Make a list of strategies for countering these situations and feelings. Ask the students, “What are some ways that all families can be made to feel included? How can we work together here at school to become more aware of and welcoming to all families?”
- Review the worksheet, asking students to offer examples from their own lives that fit each box. Help students understand that it is not bad to see one family as unusual but that it can be damaging to make a value judgment about a family based on assumptions, whether or not they fit “the stereotype.”

Note When students begin to recognize their own assumptions, they might experience guilt, which can cause resistance and immobilization. To minimize this guilt, it is important to emphasize to students that we have all learned assumptions and that it is part of human nature to categorize people and things. Everyone makes mistakes with these categories. It is particularly effective when a teacher owns his or her own assumptions in front of the class. When a teacher catches him- or herself falling into stereotypical thinking, realizes the mistake and corrects his or her thinking, students then have a model for a healthy response.

Extension For homework, ask students to think about gender, race or sexual orientation and how we learn assumptions about these identities. One way to do this is to distribute copies of the Stereotype Reinforcement worksheet and ask students to write examples in each box for the identity they have selected to explore.

Assessment and Evaluation Review the strategies students brainstormed to help children from all kinds of families feel welcome. Do the strategies show an understanding of how they can help or how the school could help? Did students participate in the discussions?

**HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS ON FAMILIES REINFORCED?
WORKSHEET: DIFFERENT? / SIMILAR? / I WONDER?**

1. What family is different from yours?

List the differences:

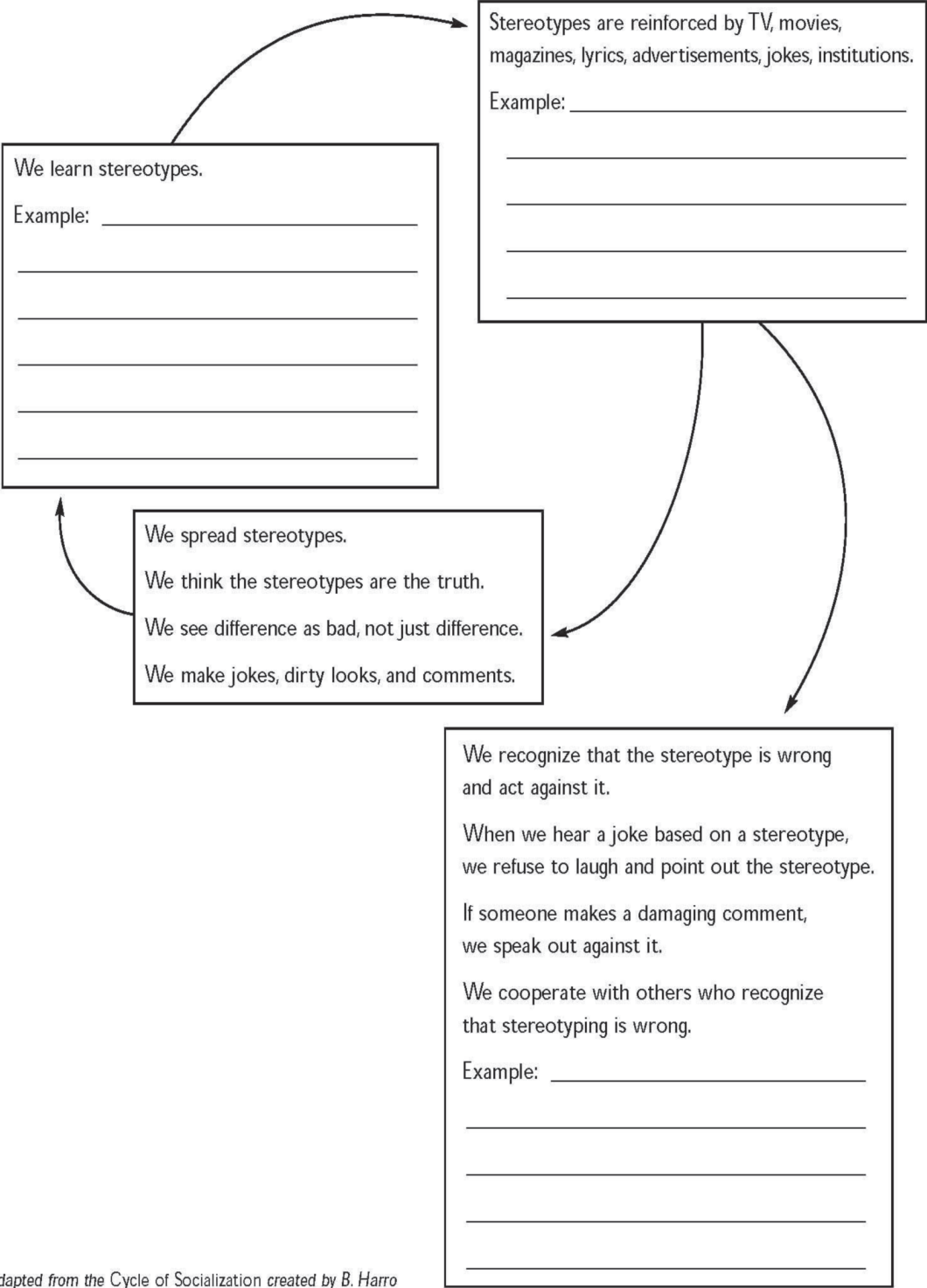
2. What family is similar to yours?

List the similarities:

3. What family makes you wonder something?

4. What do you wonder about them?

Stereotype Reinforcement



Adapted from the Cycle of Socialization created by B. Harro



Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy. We seek to create an inclusive and just world where all LGBTQ families with children have visibility and opportunities to thrive as valued participants in our schools, institutions, and communities. Visit us at www.ourfamily.org



Not In Our School (NIOS) is a part of the Not In Our Town national organization that produces films and brings communities together to stand up to hate and to create welcoming communities. NIOS develops programs and a network of P-16 educators to create inclusive and accepting schools, free of bullying and all forms of intolerance. Find films, lesson plans and campaign guides for your school at notinourschool.org.



A special thank you goes out to Welcoming Schools, a project of the Human Rights Campaign, which allowed us to reprint the glossary and lesson plans aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and many additional resources for elementary schools on:

- Embrace family diversity
- Develop LGBTQ-inclusive schools
- Prevent bias-based bullying and gender stereotyping
- Support transgender and gender expansive students

Administrators, educators and parents/guardians can find additional materials at www.welcomingschools.org.

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