

Proposed

Lesson 2:

GAY AND LESBIAN PARENTS AND GUARDIANS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Grades K-3

*In the film, first- and second-grade teachers read the book *Asha's Mums* to their students. The book is about a girl who does not know what to do when her teacher does not believe that she has two mothers. Class discussions following the reading of the book touch on themes of empathy and friendship as well as family diversity.*

Teaching about families is usually part of the curriculum in early elementary school grades. The following lesson plan, adapted from the Welcoming Schools Guide (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project provides a model to teach children's literature that is inclusive of same-sex families.



Goal

- 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 identify what makes a family.
- Students will be able to identify and describe a variety of families.
- Students will understand that families have some similarities and some differences.

Time Required

One 45-minute session or two 30-minute sessions.

Materials

Chart paper and markers.

Required Books

 (Choose one of the following books.)

Who's in a Family? by Robert Skutch, illustrations by L. Neinhaus (Tricycle Press, 1995). This picture book has many different examples of families from the human and animal world. Simple language and pictures work well for younger students.

All Families are Special by Norma Simon, illustrations by Teresa Flavin (Albert Whitman & Company, 2003). A teacher who is going to be a grandmother leads a class in an engaging conversation about families. Children share stories about their families, addressing adoption, extended families, single parents, lesbian and gay parents, immigrant families and more.



ACTIVITY 1: Before Reading the Book

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

ACTIVITY 2: Introduce the Book

Before reading the book you have chosen for this lesson plan, ask children to pay attention to the kinds of families that are shown in the book. Tell them you want to see how many different kinds of families we can find in this book.

As you read, pause after each family and ask questions such as, "What do you see in this picture?" or "Who's in this family?"

ACTIVITY 3: After Reading the Book

Review the students' answers to the question, "What do we know about families?" Then review all the different kinds of families that were in the book. Ask them what they have learned about families from today's class.



TEACHING NOTES

Responding to Student Assumptions

While recording and responding to students' comments it is important to affirm children's experiences and also provide a lens through which they can see outside their own experiences. If, as in one of the classrooms shown in *It's Elementary*, a student says that a family is made up of a mother, a father and two children you can acknowledge that some families look like this, but also ask students for other examples of what a family can look like. When students are speaking about their own families, it can be helpful to let them know that "every person gets to decide who their family is." They may decide that their family includes a pet, a cousin who lives elsewhere, or a neighbor.

Modifications

This activity can be modified for younger students by drawing picture symbols or using magazine cut outs of family members. For example, if a student says that her family consists of a parent, a grandparent and a brother, you can draw a representation of this family.

Credit: This lesson was excerpted with permission from the *Welcoming Schools Guide* (2007), a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Family Project.

