DIVERSE FAMILIES

When someone, with the authority of a teacher say, describes the world and you're not in it, there is a moment of psychological disjuncture as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY IN THE SPHE CURRICULUM

Family is central to the formation of children's identity and is therefore a key theme throughout all the subjects of the primary curriculum. Myself, as a Psychologist in the SPHE Department of the Department of Education and Skills (DES, 1999) is vitally important for all children to see families represented in the stories they hear. It is also essential to create a sense of belonging and understanding of diversity by showcasing the realities of different family structures. Research has shown that having family discussions in schools can help to combat bullying and discrimination, and today many of the strategies we are implementing in the classroom are informed by this research.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING?

Homophobia and transphobia are forms of bullying that can be detrimental to the mental health of LGBT individuals. Children who identify as LGBT are more likely to experience bullying, which can lead to feelings of isolation and reduced sense of belonging.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS DO?

It is the role of teachers and schools to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Teachers should be trained to identify bullying behaviors and to intervene when necessary. schools can also implement policies and procedures to prevent and respond to bullying.

DIFFERENT FAMILIES, SAME LOVE

This section of the curriculum aims to promote understanding and acceptance of diverse family structures, and to encourage children to celebrate and respect differences and similarities amongst their peers and their own families. It includes, among other things, discussions about the different roles that family members can play in a child's life, and the importance of recognizing and respecting the diversity of family structures.

KEY QUESTIONS:

• How many children do you think live in a family of three?
• What do you think the purpose of the poster is?

LESSON IDEAS:

• Family history project: Ask the children to interview/video members of their family to create a family story - stories of their past and their future. Use this information to create a class mural of family drawings.
• Create a Family Rights Charter - a list of things that all families are entitled to. This can be displayed in the classroom or online.
• Analyse a selection of books to identify the family types represented (see link below for books that include LGBT characters).
• Create a class mural of family drawings.

LESSON IDEAS:

• Encourage the children to think about the different family structures they see in the poster and how they might differ.
• What makes a family?
• What do you think the purpose of the poster is?
• Reflect on the different family structures presented in the poster and discuss the similarities and differences among them.
• Discuss the different roles that family members can play in a child's life and how they might differ.

THIRD AND FOURTH CLASSES

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KEY QUESTIONS:

• What do you think the purpose of the poster is?
• How many children do you think live in a family of three?

LESSON IDEAS:

• Different Families, Same Love. Family Poster: This poster is a visual representation of different family structures found among the children.
• Make a list of all the family types represented in the poster. Ask the children to discuss the similarities and differences between these families.
• Ask the children to think about the different family structures they see in the poster and how they might differ.
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