

In Celebration of Pride Month

BY THE MCCORMICK CENTER STAFF

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Although this has always been true, in the past families were depicted in a cookie cutter version and only recently have we seen diversity in the way families are portrayed.

Today, children's education and understanding of families, sexuality, and gender are more diverse and multi-faceted. As one of the most formative environments, the classroom provides an opportunity to eliminate outdated stereotypes, and encourage children to act with acceptance and inclusivity.

Introducing and instilling these principles of respect and familiarity with LGBTQ individuals and families may seem challenging to some; however, professional guidelines and early childhood standards require inclusive practices that convey respect for all diversities, including culture, language, race, religion, age, gender, and family type. The McCormick Center believes this commitment is an essential part of leadership practices. Here are some suggestions that may assist:

CHILDREN

- **Utilize children's books** that communicate and show children different styles of families. Here are some great selections:
 - *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel
 - *Prince & Knight* by Daniel Haack
 - *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis
 - *Donovan's Big Day* by Leslea Newman
 - *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
 - *In our Mothers' House* by Patricia Polacco
 - *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders and Steven Salerno
- **Address situations of bullying** or other confrontations between children, using these contexts as learning opportunities.
- **Be open and honest** with children if they have questions about gender identity, sexuality, etc.
- **Use photo displays** in your hallways and classrooms that portray diverse family structures.
- **Integrate these materials** throughout the curriculum regularly and consistently rather than just during Pride Month.

FAMILY-ENGAGEMENT

- **Place a rainbow flag sticker** at the entrance to your school to communicate to parents that it is an inclusive and accepting space.

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- **Consider that some families may not be open** about their situation, and assumptions of a family's arrangement should not be made.
- **Offer a parent and caregiver education workshop** about gender and children. Share ways to talk about gender that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and affirming.

EMPLOYEES

- **Be mindful of one's own biases** and how these may affect conduct and the workplace community.
- **Provide resources, training, and educational materials** for staff to learn more about how to address issues or questions relating to the LGBTQ community. Include an LGBTQ glossary of terms to empower staff to use inclusive language.
- **Make employees aware** that LGBTQ members are welcome and if they so wish, are encouraged to share their personal experiences.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Use consistently inclusive language** in all materials and other communication resources, creating a curriculum that is respectful of all choices.
- **Address and stand up to** offensive comments against LGBTQ individuals and families.
- **Include your commitment** to supporting all people, irrespective of sexual or gender identity, in your group's mission.

In recent years, there has undoubtedly been great progress for the LGBTQ community. Nonetheless, our work is far from complete. We have a responsibility to provide a transparent and holistic education to our children, including the changing norms of an increasingly diverse world.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/LGBT-Resources.aspx>
- <http://www.ala.org/rt/sites/ala.org.rt/files/content/professionaltools/ResourcesforParentsandFamiliesofLGBTQIndividuals.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm>
- <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/lgbtq/lgbt-families/>
- <https://www.connectsafely.org/lgbtq-resources/>
- <https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/FamilySupportForLGBTChildrenGuidance.pdf>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/tips-for-parents-of-lgbtq-youth>
- <https://www.hrc.org/resources/all-children-all-families-additional-resources>
- <https://www.hrc.org/resources/talking-with-kids-about-lgbt-issues>
- <https://pflag.org/needsupport>
- <https://pflag.org/loving-families>
- <https://www.rebekahgienapp.com/lgbtq-resources/>
- <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/A-Practitioner-s-Resource-Guide-Helping-Families-to-Support-Their-LGBT-Children/PEP14-LGBTKIDS>

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