



Family Diversity at School

Family diversity is a reality in school and society. A school must respect the different ways of being a family and in an active way. That means making it easier for all children to see their family models reflected and validated in the school environment. Such steps will facilitate the construction of their identity and their narrative.

Adopted and fostered persons have a family narrative that must contain space for the biological and adoptive or foster family. This space will sometimes be physical and tangible. At other times, it will be a mental place, which is no less critical.

Respecting a child's diversity and privacy, and representing these differences in all classroom activities, will be fundamental for their development.

In our society, the so-called traditional family consists of a woman and a man who conceive a child. The mother brings them into the world, and both raise the infant. But this is only one representation of a family. The reality is much more complex and diverse:



- **Single-parent families**, where the children live with only one parent, the father or mother. These can be:
 - Individuals who decide to be a parent, whether their child is biological or adopted.
 - Families that have suffered a bereavement.
 - Separated or divorced parents living with their children, in some cases without contact with the other parent.
- **Reconstituted families** formed by second unions in which children from different partners or previous unions live together.
- **Foster children** who maintain links with their biological family.
- **Children taken in by their extended family** more or less permanently.
- **Same-parent families** consisting of two mothers or two fathers and their children (biological, adopted, or both).
- **Adoptive families** with adopted children, and adoptive families who also have biological children. Families may also be multiracial, multicultural or multilingual.

The family has the functions of upbringing and education towards its children, regardless of how the family's constitution. It must be able to provide the child with a climate of affection that facilitates the establishment of attachment relationships as a basis for security and self-affirmation.

Living in a family with a perceived environment of support and help among all family members is an essential reference point for the children who grow up in it.

This family diversity should be considered at school because otherwise, for some children, it can lead to emotional conflict as they have no reference points.

Recommendations for teachers

In the school context, all types of families should be included. This will make all children feel represented and help everyone be tolerant and respectful of diversity. Among the recommendations would be:

- **Use appropriate vocabulary**

In the school context, we need to use expressions inclusive of all students, whether they come from traditional or non-traditional families. Efforts should be made to use positive language:

- Use birth parents or biological parents instead of real or natural parents. Adoptive/foster parents are as real as non-adoptive parents.
- Use son or daughter by birth or biological son/daughter instead of natural son or daughter. There are no artificial sons and daughters.
- Use adoption or fostering rather than abandonment, relinquishment or rejection. Birth mothers usually make the decision responsibly and thoughtfully.
- Use the expression "this child was adopted" instead of "this child is adopted."

- **Adapting certain activities**

In schools, certain activities related to personal history are carried out. These are important from an educational point of view. We must consider the different types of families and the circumstances of the children who have been adopted or fostered. In the spirit of providing adequate care for all pupils, it is advisable to review school activities as indicated in the piece "Classic Homework Assignments"

- **Including new activities**

Undertake activities that represent the different types of families, which serve to reflect on and normalise the diversity of existing families.

It is common to work with stories and films in the first and second stages of school, infant education and the first and second cycles of primary education. Existing literature is abundant, and children are still living in a world full of fantasy. Moreover, these materials bring us closer to their level of understanding.

In the second and third cycles of primary education, advertising could be beneficial in addition to literature and films as usual resources. Searching for advertisements that reflect the different family models can greatly interest pupils.

Upon reaching more advanced learning stages, such as secondary education, we can turn to documentaries, series, and statistics. These resources may deal with the evolution of the family throughout history, the roles played by men and women, and approach the family from an anthropological point of view.

- Reviewing books used in the school
- Books, both in the classroom and the school library, should be respectful of the diversity among pupils and reflect the family possibilities in today's societies. Review existing collections and update them with volumes that include this diverse families from the first stages of infant education to the highest education levels.
- Including families in school activities
Throughout the educational year, there are numerous occasions when schools ask families to collaborate. Take advantage of these moments. Push educational centres to invite available parents to participate in school life during school hours. In-person interactions can be rewarding for parents, helping them visualise and encourage respect for diversity. Involving families directly in the development of activities and in person will benefit pupils and the whole educational community.