

Pride Month: Creating an Inclusive Classroom for All Families

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No matter where you live or your cultural background, you are unified by belonging to a family. A family has been the basis of humanity; it reflects the beautiful diversity that describes societies and cultures around the world. Many definitions of family exist; however, at its core, the concept of a family is fluid and ever evolving. In today's world, parents are bringing up their children within increasingly diverse forms. As early childhood professionals, we understand it is critical to create welcoming and supporting environments that resonate with every family. This resource provides information and strategies to support LGBTQIA+ families in your program.

What Does LGBTQIA+ Mean?

Over the years, as public opinion and attitudes toward the queer community shifted, the language describing sexual orientation and gender identity has evolved. For instance, given the ever-changing social trends within our society, the term *LGBTQ* proved to be too limiting. As the discussion relating to the matters regarding sexual and gender identities is still happening, recently, the term has been expanded to include people who identify as intersex and asexual. The plus sign is now specifically used to include those who are not directly named within the *LGBTQIA+* abbreviation. It is important to be respectful and use the terms that people identifying as LGBTQIA+ prefer.

Why Do Inclusive Classrooms Matter?

Adrienne Rich, an American poet and essayist, famously described the significance of inclusion and diversity in schools and society by saying, "When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you... when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (1986, p. 199). Early on, children start the ongoing process of developing self-representation and the need to build a healthy sense of their group identities. They construct the concept of self and group belonging within their social environments, including classroom settings, and by building deep relationships with family members or peers. The messages children receive in their early learning programs can foster or hinder their development. Classroom space plays a vital role in stimulating meaningful and sustainable relationships and providing a safe and welcoming culture. Children and LGBTQIA+ families have the right to feel seen, feel safe, and feel valued.

Below are compiled links that increase the LGBTQIA+ visibility within your program and ensure that all families feel welcome and appreciated:

- Learn about Pride Month:
 - [Library of Congress - Pride Month](#)
 - [PBS - Celebrate Pride Month](#)
 - [GLAAD - Pride Month](#)

- Check your biases:
 - [NAEYC - Journey to a More Equitable Classroom](#)
 - [Ontario Institute for Studies in Education - LGBTQ Families Speak Out About School](#)
 - [Best Start - Welcoming and Celebrating Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity in Families](#)

- Building inclusive classrooms:
 - [The Office of Head Start - Family Engagement Articles](#)
 - [Anna Paula Peixoto da Silva - Engaging Families: Partnering in Meaningful Ways](#)
 - [Welcoming Schools - Resources for Welcoming All Families](#)
 - [Shelley Secrett - Creating Inclusive Early Learning Environments for LGBTQ2+ Families](#)
 - [Education Week - 10 Tips for Building a More Inclusive Classroom](#)
 - [McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership - In Celebration of Pride Month](#)

- Curriculum:
 - [GLSEN - Inclusive Curriculum Guide](#)
 - [Edutopia - Supporting LGBTQ Students in Elementary School](#)
 - [Welcoming Schools - Resources](#)
 - [No Time for Flash Cards - 32 LGBTQ Children's Books](#)

At the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, an essential part of our work is to continue deepening our shared understanding and raising our collective awareness about the LGBTQIA+ community. We agree that the discussion on matters relating to gender identity inclusion should be enhanced and promote meaningful reflection in professional environments in the early childhood education field. The month of June marks the special time when we honor the LGBTQIA+ movement; however, we are immensely proud to celebrate the inclusion and diversity of all families.

*"It takes some strength of soul – and not just individual strength,
but collective understanding – to resist this void, this non-being,
into which you are thrust, and to stand up,
demanding to be seen and heard."*

–Adrienne Rich (1986)

Daria Drzewiecka is a Report Specialist and a member of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. She is also pursuing a doctoral degree in community psychology at National Louis University's College of Professional Studies and Advancement. Daria earned a baccalaureate degree in psychology from Roosevelt University and a graduate degree in child development and early childhood administration from Erikson Institute. She is interested in supporting initiatives leading to integrated early learning and child development systems, connecting early childhood practice with policy and research, and the functioning and effectiveness of community-based coalitions addressing the importance of early years.