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Increasing Diverse Families Inclusion in the Preschool Classroom

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Running Head: INCREASING DIVERSE FAMILIES INCLUSION IN THE PRESCHOOL
CLASSROOM

Increasing Diverse Families Inclusion in the Preschool Classroom

Rosa Edith Ayala Gomez

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Increasing Diverse Families Inclusion in the Preschool Classroom

Introduction

In preschool curriculum, same-sex families are not often included. Children can benefit from the inclusion of diverse family structures because it helps support children's individual wants, interests, and skills, along with the extent of potential their gender has. Families and children benefit from the inclusion because it offers the opportunity for those families who identify themselves in the diverse family category, to freely disclose their diverse family without worrying about acceptance and the children are able to see their family represented. To address the lack of same-sex families inclusion in preschool curriculum, I have created a two day lesson plan for preschoolers at Montebella Elementary School in Salinas, California.

Needs Statement

With the increasing diversity of family structures, preschool curriculum should be including a wide range of family types, including lesbian and gay families. The lack of same-sex families inclusion in preschool curriculum may cause the children to not see their family represented, limit views of “family” and how students see themselves in the future, and stigmatize children from same-sex families.

When the curriculum is missing the representation of diverse families, children may not see their family represented. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommends educators to offer an environment that represents the identities of the students and their families (NAEYC, 2012). This recommendation works forward with helping children get to know, acknowledge, and support one another as appreciated members of the community (NAEYC, 2012). Children's families are their primary social group that is most influential to their overall learning and socialization. Kosciw and Diaz (2008) noted that students

from same-sex families felt excluded from classroom activities such as building a family tree, where LGBT families representations were not included.

Limited view of families and how children see themselves in the future is another concern surrounding this issue. When the non-traditional family is not included in the curriculum it may cause children to believe that in order to form a family it has to be inclusive of mom and dad only. Ray and Gregory (2001) discuss children in prep (grade 1 and 2) who were born in a lesbian family, refer to their parents as “mum” and “mummy” causing confusion to their peers. Ray and Gregory (2001) mention that the responses these childrens peers offer represent curiosity and surprise, they question how it is that the individual was born then. Very similar to prep grade, preschoolers refer to their parents with the same terminology as they do, “mummy”, “mum”, etc., and are very easy to share who is part of their family. The younger children from same-sex families in the study of Ray and Gregory (2001) point out how gays and lesbians were hardly spoken about that when a child told his or her peers about their non-traditional family the other children had many questions and very often still did not understand. When preschool curriculum is lacking the inclusion of same-sex families, lesbians and gays are not being talked about, therefore this will also cause confusion and misunderstanding to children when a child from a same-sex family shares about their non-traditional family.

Another concern surrounding this issue is how it stigmatizes children from same-sex families. The non-inclusion of same-sex families in the curriculum may cause children to assume that any other family other than the traditional one, is not good nor is it a family. Rimalower and Caty (2009) state that other than the distinctive challenges same-sex parents face, there is zero differences between children raised by one or more gay parent or heterosexual parents. This supports the fact that same-sex parents are as successful as heterosexual parents in forming a

family and raising their children. Therefore, preschools should offer the inclusion of diverse families in their curriculum to provide children with the different variety of families that there is and not only limit it to the heterosexual family.

Given that children may not see their family being represented, limited views of families and how they see themselves in the future, and stigmatization of children of same-sex families are of concern about my topic, I have created a two day lesson plan on diverse families for the preschoolers at MonteBella Elementary School.

Development

In the early childhood years, children develop a strong sense of gender. Gender development moves through a number of stages, where gender-related beliefs are obtained and become rigid during preschool years (Ruble et al., 2007). Slaby and Frey (1975) discuss the stages children move through: first learning basic gender identity or labeling of their own and others, next learning that gender remains stable over time, and lastly learning that gender is a fixed characteristic that is not changed by a modification in appearance or activities (as cited in Ruble et al., 2007). Hillard and Liben (2010) mention that children quickly intake and reproduce the gendered opinions of the adults around them and they then initiate to arrange themselves accordingly to those gender categories (as cited in Wingrave, 2018).

If children are not presented with diverse examples, their individual wants, interests, and skills may be discouraged by the expectations of their gender compliance. As young children learn about gender categories and that they belong to one of these, they will be highly driven to comply with gender stereotypes (Halim, Ruble, Tamis-Lemonda & Shrout, 2013). Some of those gender stereotypes include activities children engage in. Laevers and Verboven (2000) describe those activities as expectations of girls playing with creative activities while boys tend to play

with physical activities (As cited in Wingrave, 2018). Therefore, children should be offered a wide range of examples to allow them to freely express themselves and navigate through the extent of potential their gender has.

Two elements of gender development that apply to my project are supporting children's gender expression and gender roles. Supporting children's gender expression applies to my approach because children may exhibit or contribute to certain behaviors others may view as masculine or feminine, which should be supported to allow children to make their own choices on how to express themselves (clothes, nickname, toy preference). Supporting children's gender roles applies to my approach because children need to be offered a range of roles that will help them realize the extent of their potential. Apart from that, supporting gender roles also emphasizes equality between genders.

Consideration of Diversity

I will be conducting my project at MonteBella Elementary School in Teacher Yesenia's preschool classroom. The ethnic composition of the participants ought to reflect that of MonteBella Elementary School. According to the School Accountability Report Card (SARC 2018-19), the student population is as follows: Latino 95%; Caucasian 2%; Asian 1%; Other 1%. Their socioeconomically disadvantaged population is 87%, with their English Language Learner population being 70%, students with disability population 11%, and Migrant population 10%. The lesson plans will be conducted in English; therefore participants will have to be English proficient. The project is geared for preschool children. Therefore, the content and approach would not apply to children who are older. Since the project is aimed for preschool children, the academic language used to conduct the approach has to be easily understood by the participants.

In order for my project to apply to older children I would go more in depth about the LGBTQ acronym and describe what gender identity each letter represents with a full definition to accompany it. I would also demonstrate non-cartoon or anime pictures of diverse families and maybe incorporate examples of real life individuals, including peers I know or known famous artists.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to provide a two day lesson plan for preschool children at Monte Bella Elementary School in Salinas, California.

By the end of the project, participants will:

1. Identify what components make a family.
2. Identify familial similarities to characters in the books.
3. Identify same-sex families as a family type.

Method

Day 1

First, I would have introduced myself, and explained I would be reading a new book to them. Before introducing the book, I would have led a discussion by asking the children what made a family. They would also be prompted to raise their hand when they had an answer to share in order to provide a fair opportunity to all participants. As the children express their answers, I would be writing them down on the white board. This portion would take about 8 minutes. As I wrap up the answers they have for me, I would proceed with introducing the book I would be reading to them. I would read the title of the book, *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson, Parnell & Cole, 2015). I would then proceed to read the book. Once I finish, I would ask the children what made Tango and her fathers a family. Again, I would instruct them

to raise their hand if they want to share, and I would write down their answers on the white board. This activity would take about eight minutes. I would then distribute a worksheet to accompany the reading of *And Tango Makes Three*. On the worksheet, the students are offered a variety of family types and are asked to circle the family that looks like Tango's family. See Appendix A. I would read the instructions to the children and offer support as they complete the desired task. Following that, I would ask the children if they are all done and collect the worksheet. Following the collection of the worksheet, I would review the worksheet with them by going over the desired task and circling the correct family that looked like Tango's family. I would then lead a discussion asking what things were similar about Tango's family compared to their own. The answers provided would be written on the white board and the children would be asked to raise their hand to share. After responses are provided, I would ask the children a second question to continue the discussion. They would be asked what things were different about Tango's family from their own. Children will raise their hand to share their answer and their responses would be recorded on the white board. This portion would take about fifteen minutes. After the children finish sharing their answers, I would review the responses from the white board. Day 1 would be completed by thanking the children for having me as a guest and letting them know I enjoyed reading about Tango's family with them.

Day 2

First, I would greet the children and let them know I will be sharing a new book with them today. As I pull out the book I would have the cover of the book facing the children and be moving it from left to right so all the children are able to see it. As I face the cover to them I would be reading the title, *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman & Cornell, 2016). I would ask the children what they think the book will be about by looking at the cover of the book. I would

then proceed with the reading of the book and ask the children questions throughout the reading, “How do you think Heather feels?” “Does Heather and her mommies look happy together?” “How can you tell?” The reading of the book would take about six minutes. After finishing the reading of the book, I would distribute a worksheet to them to accompany the reading. The instructions would be read by me and I would guide them through the worksheet to facilitate the completion of it. In the worksheet, the children are asked to agree or disagree with statements about families and are also asked to draw their family. See Appendix B. Following the completion of the worksheet, I would review the first part of the worksheet with them by going over the answers of the statements. Once I finish discussing the statements, I would move forward with the second part of the worksheet. The second part of the worksheet would be discussed by asking the children about their family drawing. I would ask the children how their family was similar or alike to Heather’s family. I would instruct them to raise their hand to share their answers and write down their responses on the white board. Following that question, I would ask them how their family was different from Heather’s family. Their responses would be recorded on the white board. Once participants finished sharing their answers regarding the questions asked, I would collect the worksheet. Day 2 would be completed by reminding the children how Heather’s mothers were able to care and love Heather even if their family consisted of two mommies. I would end the day by thanking the children for reading the book with me and give out stickers to all the children as a goodbye and thank you.

Results

Due to covid-19 I was unable to execute my lesson plan. Therefore, my results section is lacking information.

Discussion

Due to covid-19 I was unable to execute my lesson plan. Therefore, my discussion section is lacking information.

References

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Appendix A

Worksheet for the reading of *And Tango Makes Three*

Name: _____

**Families come in all shapes and sizes, but the most important thing is that all
the people in it love each other ♥**

- **Instructions:** Circle the family that looks like Tango's family



Appendix B

Worksheet for the reading of *Heather Has Two Mommies*

Name: _____

True  or false  about a family

Read the sentences. Circle  if true or  if false. Circle one:

1. A child CANNOT have two moms.



2. A child can have one mom and one dad.



3. Two dads CANNOT take care of a child.



4. Two moms can take care of a child.



5. A child can have two dads.



Can you draw your family?

Appendix C

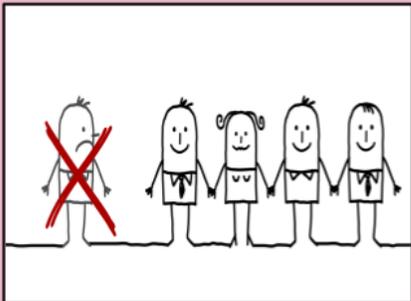


Need

With the increasing diversity of family structures, preschool curriculum should be including a wide range of family types, including lesbian and gay families.



Need



The lack of same-sex families inclusion in preschool curriculum may cause:

- **Children to not see their family represented**
- **Limit views of “family” and how students see themselves in the future**
- **Stigmatize children from same-sex families**

Gender Development



- Basic gender identity of self and others
- Remains stable
- Fixed characteristic

Gender Development



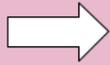
If children are not presented with diverse examples their individual wants, interests, and skills may be discouraged. Their own choice on how to express themselves and the extent of potential their gender has may also be limited.

What will I do?

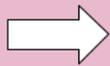
Given the need for preschool curriculum to incorporate diverse families, I created a two day lesson plan for the preschoolers at Monte Bella Elementary School in Salinas, California.



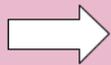
Learning Outcomes



Identify what components make a family.



Identify familial similarities to characters in the books.



Identify same-sex families as a family type.



Method

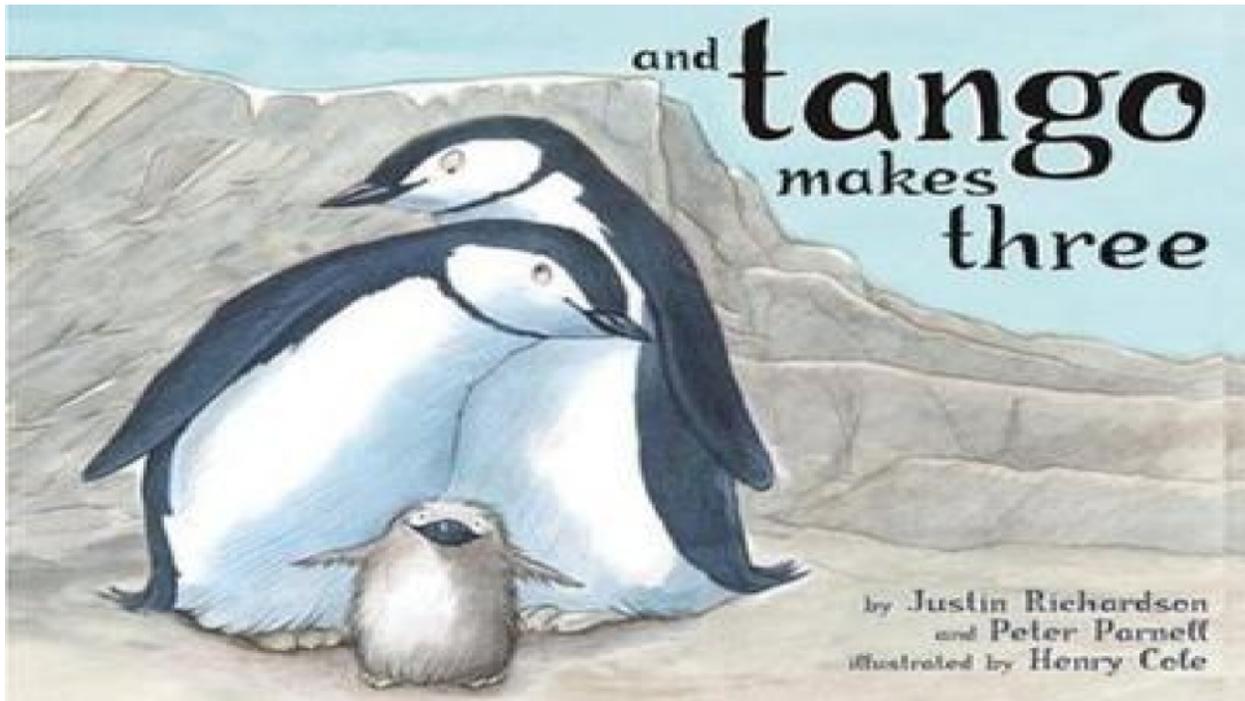


- Introduce myself
- "What makes a family?" Record answers.
- Read, *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson, Parnell, & Cole, 2015).
- "What made Tango and her fathers a family?" Record answers.
- Worksheet
- Collect and review.
- Discussion :

What things are similar about Tango's family to their own

What things are different about Tango's family to their own.

- Review responses.
- End the day.



Appendix A
Worksheet for the reading of *And Tango Makes Three*

Name: _____

Families come in all shapes and sizes, but the most important thing is that all the people in it love each other ♥

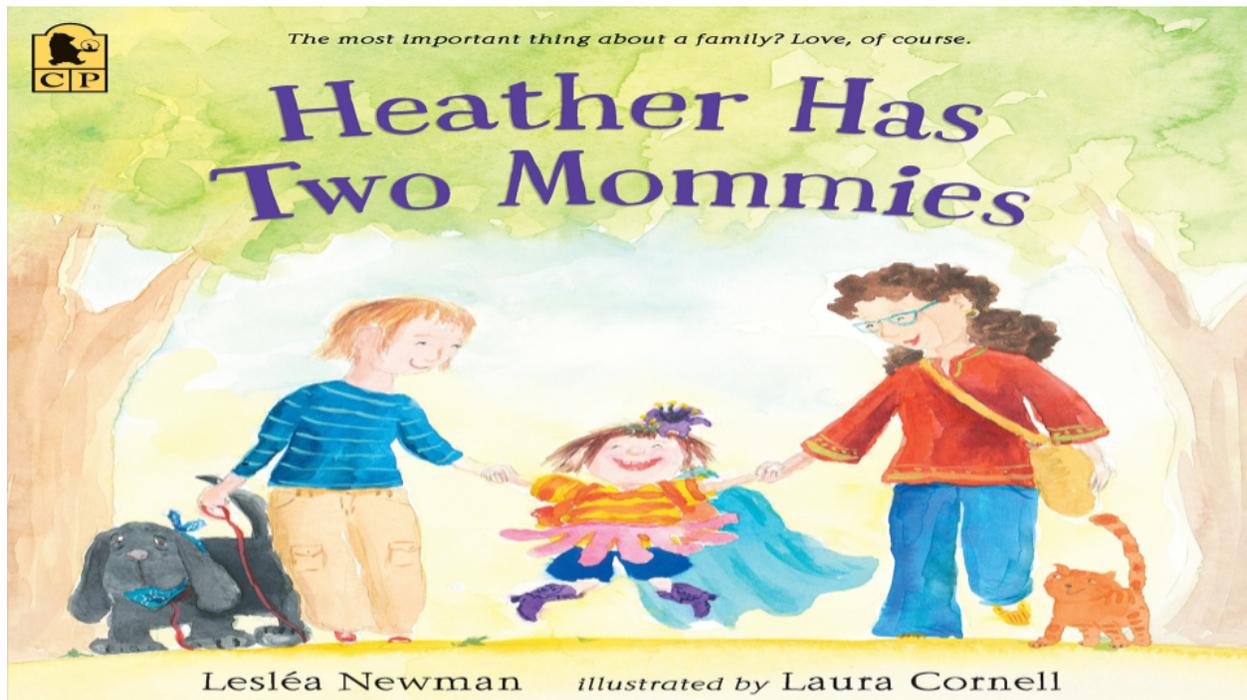
- **Instructions:** Circle the family that looks like Tango's family



Method



- Greet.
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman & Cornell, 2016).
 "What might the book be about?"
- Proceed with reading of the book and ask questions throughout.
- Worksheet.
- Review worksheet.
- lead discussion
 "How is your family similar to Heather's family?" Record answers
 "How is your family different from Heather's family?" Record answers.
- Collect.
- End the day.



Appendix B
Worksheet for the reading of *Heather Has Two Mommies*

Name: _____

True  or false  about a family

Read the sentences. Circle  if true or  if false. Circle one:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. A child CANNOT have two moms. |  |  |
| 2. A child can have one mom and one dad. |  |  |
| 3. Two dads CANNOT take care of a child. |  |  |
| 4. Two moms can take care of a child. |  |  |
| 5. A child can have two dads. |  |  |

Can you draw your family?

Results

Due to Covid-19
I was unable to
execute my
lesson plan.

Discussion

Due to Covid-19
I was unable to
execute my
lesson plan.

Thank you!
Any questions?



