



Family Vocabulary

Connect with families and caregivers in your classroom community to find out the language they use to refer to their families to help respectfully answer questions that may arise. We encourage you to expand beyond this list so that all of your students and their families feel welcomed in their school community.

Adoption: When adults bring children into their families and legally become the parents of those children.

Birth Parent: A biological parent.

Blended Family: Two families who come together to form a new family. This may include step-parents and step-siblings.

Chosen Family: People who you care about and consider family, such as friends or neighbors.

Divorce: When people legally separate and end a marriage.

Donor or Surrogate: People who help other people have children.

Extended Family: All of your relatives, including your grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. This also includes neighbors, friends and chosen family.

Foster Parent: A person—other than a child's first family—who takes a child into their home and takes care of them for as long as their family needs help.

Guardian: A person who has responsibility by law to care for a child.

Half-Sibling: Siblings who have one biological parent in common.

Interfaith Family: When people of different religious backgrounds are part of the same family.

LGBTQ Family: A family in which some people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary or queer. This could include parents, guardians, foster parents, children, chosen family, siblings or grandparents who are LGBTQ.

Lesbian: People who love people of the same gender—two women.

Gay: People who love people of the same gender.

Bisexual: People who love people of more than one gender.

Pansexual: People who love people of any gender.

Transgender: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/ midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).

Non-Binary: People who do not feel like the words “girl” or “boy” fit. They may feel like both or neither. They sometimes use pronouns such as they/them/theirs.

Queer: People use this word as a way to identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people love each other. When used in a mean way, it is a word that hurts.

Mixed Family: When people of different racial, ethnic, national, religious or cultural backgrounds are part of the same family.

Multigenerational Family: When more than one generation of a family lives together.

Multilingual Family: When people within a family speak more than one language.

Multiracial Family: When people of different racial backgrounds are part of the same family.

Single-Parent Family or Solo-Parent Family:

A family in which one parent cares for the child or children.

Step-Parent: When a divorced or solo-parent forms a family with a new person, the new partner might become a step-parent to the children.

Step-Siblings: When a divorced or solo-parent forms a family with a new person and that person already has children, those children can become step-siblings.

