



SHARING *OUR FAMILY!*, A FILM ABOUT FAMILY DIVERSITY WITH FAMILIES

LEVEL: Families

LENGTH OF TIME: 1 hour.

GOALS

- To strengthen your school's connection with families and build community.
- To help families understand what it means to be a welcoming school for all families.
- For families to see how educators can work with students in welcoming ways.

OBJECTIVES

- Families and community members will have the opportunity to see a short film about how one school is developing a welcoming school and see Welcoming Schools lessons in action with teachers and students.
- Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions about Welcoming Schools and what your school is doing to create a welcoming school.

NOTES

In the process of creating a nurturing environment for students, a clear message needs to be shared with families. The message should assure families that this school is made up of all kinds of families, and we want all students and families to feel welcome.

An event for families with a showing of the film and having conversations is a way to bring families into the school opening dialogue and building bridges across differences. Combining the showing of this film with other efforts to help families get to know each other will strengthen the sense of belonging for children and adults.

Children who have viewed this film, overwhelmingly share that they feel the film conveys a sense that families are about loving, sharing, struggling, and helping each other. They appreciated the genuine expressions of the children and families in the film when we interviewed them.

The film closes with the words of Nathan, age nine: "It is important to have diverse children, to have diverse families in a school so you know how to include everyone... you don't just go to the people who are like you, you reach out and embrace everyone."

MATERIALS

Internet access and equipment to show the film; access the film at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTqC4U_98Xo (7 minutes);

Spanish subtitles for the film can be accessed by clicking settings on YouTube; Have food and drinks available.

SHARE A SYNOPSIS OF THE FILM WITH FAMILIES

- This film showcases students in grades K-5 and their families sharing what family means to them.
- Family members share what is special about each other, moments of struggle, and above all express love for one another.
- The film also shows school events and celebrations with all the diverse families having fun together.
- We meet many kinds of families: large and small, multigenerational, families with a mom and a dad, a single dad or mom, and two moms or two dads. The film also shows adopted children, families who speak a language other than English, and families with two parents/caregivers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- The school featured in the film has had trainings from Welcoming Schools in embracing family diversity and creating a welcoming community. Some Welcoming Schools lesson plans are in the film as well.

PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION

Before you show the film, have partners answer these questions and share out with the group.

- What do you remember being taught about different kinds of families when you were a child?
- Do you remember seeing your family structure represented in books, lesson plans, classroom visuals, and conversations?
- How did you feel about seeing/not seeing your family represented in the classroom or in school?

SHOW THE FILM, OUR FAMILY!

POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION

Follow up questions after viewing the film:

- Did you see any families like yours reflected in the film?
- Did you see family structures that were new to you?
- What do you think your children will learn from this film?
- What questions could you ask your children at home to continue the conversation about respecting all families?

CONCLUSION

- What are some ways that our school could become more welcoming to all the students and their families?
- What are ways, at home, that you can share positive messages with your children about family structures that are different from yours?

Credit: Based on “*Our Family!* Film Lesson Guide”, Becki Cohn-Vargas, Ed.D., Not in Our Town and Our Family Coalition.