

Relationships, Day 3: Families

Special Education: Secondary, Lesson # 5

Student Learning Objectives:

To be able to...

1. Describe his or her family in terms of:
 - a) membership and
 - b) roles of family members
2. Discuss some differences among families
3. Explain one reason why families are important

Materials Needed:

- Magazine pictures of families
- Butcher paper and pens for family diagramming
- OPTIONAL: Documentary film *That's a Family* in VHS or DVD
Available from Women's Educational Media, as part of their Respect for All series: 415-641-4616; <http://www.womedia.org/thatsafamily.htm>

Agenda:

1. Defining the term "family"
2. Describe students' families
3. OPTIONAL: Show the documentary video *That's a Family* and discuss it.
4. Family diagramming
5. Roles family members play

One of the most important groups that children belong to is their family. Families provide food, shelter, nurturing, guidance, support and help. This lesson teaches about relationships between family members and the role that each member plays.

It is critical to remember in this lesson that many students do not come from traditional two-parent family structures. Discussion of a variety of living arrangements and family groupings (including single-parent homes, foster care, group home situations, etc.) will help to facilitate an acceptance of differences.

Activities

Ask students, “What is a family?” Provide a variety of magazine pictures - individual people, groups of friends, classmates, and some obvious families (eating dinner together at a table, camping together, sharing a special time, etc.) Have students point to the families.

Plan ahead. Have photos of students’ families or family members. Ask students to point to the people in the picture and indicate who the person is and how they feel about them.

Students can hold up their pictures for the rest of the class to see.

1. Define the term *family*.

Important Teacher Note: There are many different types of families. Many of your students may not live with their birth families or families of origin. Some may live in foster care, or in group living situations. Some students may live in multi-generation families, same-sex parent families, or single-parent families. The concept of the *family* then, needs to be carefully presented, in order that all students feel included.

- A. To start this discussion, ask students this question:
“*What is a family?*”

One all-embracing definition of “family” is “a group of people who love you”. Another helpful definition is “two or more people who love and take care of one another. Usually they are related and/or live together.” You may also want to define family as “a set of parents or step-parents and their children”. This is also the time to introduce the concept of the extended family - grandparents, aunts and uncles, step-sisters and brothers, foster parents, etc. Remember that pets are sometimes considered to be parts of families, too!

- B. Work with students to arrive together at a definition for family that includes all forms of families. Then write your class definition on the board.

2. Describing students’ families

- A. Next have your students describe their own families. Have them answer the following question (which you may have written on the board);

“*Who is in your family?*”

Accept a diverse listing of answers. Students who live in group living situations may mention not only their birth or foster families but also staff members at a residential facility. These people count, too!

- B. Ask for volunteers to tell the class about their family and who is in it. Remind students that it’s okay to “pass” in

this class.

- C. Point out that families are all different - just as people are different. Some families have one parent who lives at home, others have two. Some have two mothers or two fathers. Some families have more children than others. Some families don't have a mother or father living with the children - children may have care-providers or houseparents who help them. But they are all families, and everyone belongs to a family of some type

3. OPTIONAL: Show the 35-minute documentary film *That's a Family* and discuss it.

The film tells the stories, in their own words, of children in families with parents of different races or religions, divorced parents, a single parent, gay or lesbian parents, adoptive parents or grandparents as guardians. Each child discusses the configuration of their family, what's special about their family, what's challenging about their kind of family and what they want other children to understand about families like theirs. It comes with a wonderful *Discussion and Teaching Guide*.

- The film portrays children and families that are happy and highly functional at this point in time. Acknowledge that most families have times when things are not so happy and people aren't getting along so well.
- The film also does not introduce every configuration of family. Discuss which kinds of families were not portrayed (two-biological-parent families, foster families and group homes, couples without children, bigger and extended families living together).

Invite people to comment on the ways their own families are similar to and different from the families in the film, thinking about, for instance, the ways they have fun together, the ways they change over time, the ways that different family members take care of one another.

4. Family diagramming

- A. Pass out a large piece of butcher paper and colored marking pens to each student. You may want to divide into small groups for this exercise.
- B. Tell students that they are going to draw a picture or diagram of their family. Model the process for the students on the front board or a large piece of butcher paper.

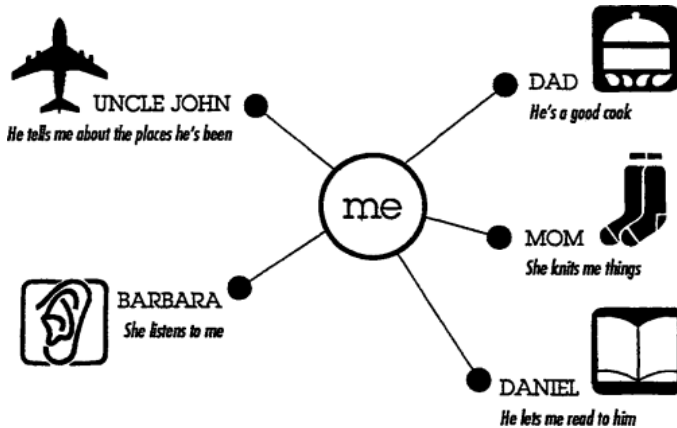
Have them draw a small circle in the middle of their paper

Work individually with students who need more support for this exercise.

“Polaroid” or other pictures of family members can be collected and may be easier for some students to relate to than the drawings (representing people) at the end of the spokes.

and write the word “me” inside of it.

From the circle draw one spoke for each member of the family. At the end of the spoke, write the person’s name or nickname and draw a little picture about something that is special about that person. (For example, a student might draw a picture of an airplane by the name of Uncle John, because he describes his trips to “me”. Another spoke might be for Dad, with a happy face representing the way “he makes me laugh”.)



Students should include whomever they think of when they think of their family. Anyone the student considers “family” is “acceptable”.

- C. Invite two or three students to share their diagrams and explain their drawings.

Find pictures of people cooking, working, hugging, shopping, taking out the garbage, etc. Have students pair the pictures of the family member roles with pointing to the picture of the person in their family who plays that role.

5. Roles Family Members Play

- A. Physical and emotional needs. Explain that families and family members meet two different types of needs that we all have. There are physical needs, and emotional needs.
- B. You can either provide the students with examples or have them brainstorm for the blackboard under two column headings - emotional and physical. Some needs they may come up with are:
 - **Physical Needs** - shelter, food, clothing, medical care
 - Emotional Needs** - to feel you belong, to feel that others care for you, to feel that you are useful, to feel appreciated, to feel understood, to feel listened to, to laugh and cry with, to feel needed and special.
- C. Discuss the list of needs. Explore the notion that ALL family members have these needs and that they all play different roles in helping members meet their needs.
- D. Ask students to think about who plays the cooking role, who plays the income-producing role, who plays the joke teller role, etc. in their family? Point out stereotypes as they arise.

Dear Trusted Adult,

In class we discussed different types of families, and the roles and responsibilities that family members have.

We learned about different types of family structures and did an exercise called "Diagramming your Family". In this exercise, the students drew a small circle representing themselves. From the circle come spokes, one line for each family member. At the end of each spoke is the family member's name and a small drawing of something that makes that person special within the family.

Students were asked to bring home their family diagram and talk about it. Another approach for this exercise is for you to go through the process with yourself as the center circle. This will reinforce the message that family members are related to one another.

Supporting activities for this lesson are to:

- *Discuss extended family. Family trees are always interesting, and photo albums can provide a rich source of conversation - especially if you tell stories about the pictured relatives. This is a nice way to help students understand and become better acquainted with their roots and their heritage.*
- *Watch television and discuss the families presented . What family roles do the characters play?*
- *Help students to interview a member of their family about their roles and responsibilities*

If you have any questions or comments, please call me.

Sincerely,

Teacher, Principal or Nurse

NOTE: All Trusted Adult Exercises are Optional.