



***THAT'S A FAMILY!* AN EVENING FAMILY FORUM**

“Family is the first point of reference for children as they begin to understand themselves and the world around them. If children can name and understand the differences among families, hopefully this will help lay a foundation for them to understand and respect other kinds of difference as well.” — *That's a Family!* Discussion/Teaching Guide

SUGGESTED LEVEL: Adults and students.

LENGTH OF TIME: One hour or longer.

GOAL

- All families will feel more included at the school.

OBJECTIVES

- People will identify that all families have things in common.
- Participants will be able to identify and appreciate a wide variety of family structures.
- Participants will identify ways their families are similar to and/or different from other families.

INTRODUCTION

That's a Family! is a resource for educators and parents to discuss families and build community in a school. It is exclusively the words of children speaking about their own families. The film shows that all families have some things in common and that love and caring can happen in all family structures.

That's a Family! provides children and parents with a common experience of diversity through the families and individuals in the film. There are six family structures portrayed in the film — mixed families in terms of race, language or religion, families formed through adoption, families with two moms or two dads, families where children are cared for by grandparents or other guardians, single-parent families and families where children live in two places because of divorce.

This evening activity can be organized by educators or by a committee of parents/guardians and educators. In the classroom, *That's a Family!* works for grades 3 to 5, where the discussion can be richer than in earlier grades. For a family forum, it can be open to all grade levels.

The key to a successful evening is to do the groundwork to ensure that many people attend the event. The more people who help plan the event, the more people will attend. Make sure it is well publicized. Reach out to all kinds of families in your school. Serve food!

EDUCATORS' NOTES

If there are families with different configurations in your school, such as families with two moms or two dads, adoptive parents or foster parents, it can be good for the facilitator to check in with them before the evening to find out the language that they use to refer to their families or answer questions that may arise. If there is only one such family in your school, be careful not to continually single that family out as an example.

MATERIALS: DVD, TV/Screen, DVD player or a computer and projector.

REQUIRED DVD/Video: *That's a Family!* Available at: www.groundspark.org. Not required: *That's A Family! Discussion/Teaching Guide* comes free with the DVD. Excerpts from the discussion guide are available at: www.groundspark.org.

Three lesson plans from the discussion guide are also available through KQED Public Television, at: www.kqed.org/w/mosaic/gaylesbian/.

ACTIVITY: WINDOWS AND MIRRORS

At a Family Forum you can generate a rich discussion using the prompt:

“As you watch the film, choose one family that has something in common with your family, that in some way mirrors your family, and choose a family that is very different from your family, that in some way provides a window into another experience.”

After the movie is over ask a few participants to share a window or a mirror.

Sometimes participants are shy about sharing. It can be helpful if you model by sharing a window or mirror of your own. You can also have people turn to the person next to them and share in partners. That way everyone has an opportunity to tell their story. Then you can ask for large group sharing. Sometimes it is useful to ask someone you know, ahead of time, if they would be willing to be the first to speak. You can ask for general reactions to the film. You can ask if it rings true for people. Often conversations start out slowly in a large group, which is why it may be useful to partner-share or share in small groups first. This is an important community-building time.

MODIFICATIONS

Have participants use a Sentence Starters response sheet during a three- to five-minute journal time, so they can reflect on the film before sharing ideas and responses with others. Examples of sentence starters are:

I feel . . .	I think . . .	I know . . .
I wonder . . .	I noticed . . .	I hope . . .
I believe . . .	What if . . .	I question . . .

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Did the evening bring families together in your school?
- Did people gain some understanding about the commonalities of all families?
- Did the event open dialogue between people about families?

Developed by Emmy Howe based on the work of Emily Style, co-director of the National S.E.E.D. Project for Inclusive Curriculum, Wellesley Center for Women. See: www.wcwonline.org/seed/curriculum.html