



FAST FACTS: Adoption Awareness in Schools

A Back to School Guide for Parents & Educators

Connection Before Curriculum

It is vital our kids feel a connection with their teacher. They need to feel safe and secure before any learning can take place. This stems from connection and attachment theory. The concepts can further be found in "[The Connected Child](#)" by Dr. Karen Purvis and "[Whole Brain Child](#)" by Dr. Dan Siegel. It is important to update the teacher on the child's information and story, honoring the child's privacy at the same time. Let them know your child's needs, struggles, strengths, and motivations. Check in with the teacher often.

Connection time is equally important with the parent before and after school. Give them undivided connection time including touch, listening ears, and playful engagement. Family dinners, bedtime stories, and limited screen time go a long way. Don't overschedule kids during the school year with extracurricular activities especially in the first year of bonding. Less can be more, especially when beginning the transition into a new school year or at a time when forming that initial attachment with an adopted child.

Family Projects

Whether the project is on how eye or hair color is determined, family tree, race/ethnicity, or timeline birth story pictures, these projects involving family can be complicated, triggering, humiliating, and hurtful for many kids. If this project comes up, speak up on behalf of your children. Offer alternatives to the teacher so that your child's situation can be accommodated. However, not all kids will be comfortable completing, or have the information available to them, to complete these assignments.

Adopted children have suffered, at the very least, the loss of their birth parent, and then extended family. Many of these children have experienced traumatic situations. Some have spent time in foster care or orphanages. Lessons on a traditional family configuration excludes students and can also trigger grief reactions.

Many teachers are not aware of the negative impacts of these projects on foster/adoptive children unless brought to their attention. Fortunately, these assignments can easily be modified to work for children in all different types of families, without missing out on the educational goals. Work with your child to see what their preferences are for your support.



Race

It is important for our children to be seen for who they are. Colorblindness is not real. Therefore, it does not do any good to live in a universe where we pretend it is. It is important to celebrate and acknowledge our children's race.

Teachers need to see race and celebrate a child's culture. Encourage children to be inclusive and support each unique child's cultural identity.

Ways to encourage diversity in the classroom includes donating items to the classroom such as multicultural crayons, skin tone bandages, and skin tone paper. You can also offer to donate and read a diverse book or two in the child's classroom.

Adoption

When you connect with your child's teacher, yes, tell them they are adopted. Share experiences and educate teachers about open adoption. Some kids will talk about their birth families and it is important for teachers to be educated on this topic and understand basic adoption vocabulary and their meanings. Encourage teachers to ask you questions. Offer adoption education resources to teachers.

There is no need to share intimate, private details about your child's adoption. But, beginning the conversation and keeping the lines of communication open shows advocacy and support for your child. Adoption is an important part of our child's life and it is important to partner with the teacher. Check in with emails, meetings, and at conferences. Donate adoption and foster care books to the classroom if your teacher agrees. A good resource for teachers is "In On It: What Adoptive Parents Would Like You To Know About Adoption" by Elisabeth O'Toole.

Your Child's Adoption Story

It is important not to hand your child's adoption story out freely and without regard. People will ask about how much they cost, medical history, why they were placed, and birth names. Allow your child to share the specifics when they are ready with the appropriate education and content screening. Share with others who ask general adoption knowledge including education on what an adoption journey is, range of cost, and that our adoptive family is a "real" family whether adopted or biological parent, child, or sibling. A great book for parents to utilize in helping children to share their story is "W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook" by Marilyn Schoettle.

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To learn more about Foster Adopt Minnesota and our efforts to ensure each child will have a permanent family, call 612-861-7115 or visit www.fosteradoptmn.org.