

Learn to Include

TEACHER'S MANUAL



*Teaching and Learning about Diverse Families
in a Primary School Setting*

Editor: Vicki Harding
Learn to Include Educational Series

Publisher:

Learn to Include

PO Box 535, Dulwich Hill, NSW, 2206

www.hotkey.net.au/~learn_to_include

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This project has been funded by the Crime Prevention Division,
NSW Attorney General's Department.

ISBN 0-9581290-4-5

Graphic Design Alissa Harding

Illustration Chris Bray-Cotton

Printing KBO Printing Solutions, Sydney

Distribution Bulldog Books, Sydney

February 2005

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Janice Atkin from the Professional Support and Curriculum K-12 Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training, for advice and support at all stages of the development of this manual.

Thanks to teachers at **Newtown Public School**, Sydney for developing the Teaching and Learning Activities, and to the students and Principals of **Balgowlah Heights Public School** and **Newbridge Heights Public School** for research support.

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A special thank you to Teresa Clonan from ACON Western Sydney who facilitated the research groups.

We acknowledge the support of The Pratt Foundation through Marrickville Council's Social Conscience Grants Program

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Special thanks to:

Jackie Braw, Daniel Maddedu and Brenna.

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Learn to Include Resources

Why Learn to Include?

Australian Primary School students come from a variety of cultural, racial, religious and family backgrounds, and it is generally accepted that this variety will be reflected in the contemporary classroom. Generally, the focus of teaching and learning, particularly when exploring family backgrounds, is given to the two-parent nuclear family form. Families that fall outside of the 'norm', especially families with same sex parents, are often overlooked because of a lack of Australian resources for teaching family diversity to primary students. Without resources to support the teaching of family diversity, teachers can find themselves at a loss as to the best way to deal with these issues when they need to be discussed. All students benefit from learning about diversity, and some students will also feel their home life has been validated when diverse family relationships are included in the classroom activities and resources.

Learn to Include has developed a package of resources to assist teachers to begin to explore family diversity in the classroom. The resources target Stage One students, but may be used in a variety of ways for older primary aged students as well.

Below is a list of materials produced by Learn to Include and suggestions about how these resources may be used in class individually or as a series. They are available from the Sydney distributor, Bulldog Books or from *Learn to Include*, via www.hotkey.net.au/~learn_to_include

All products have been developed in consultation with the NSW Department of Education and Training, including teachers working at public schools in NSW.

Easy to Read Series:

Early Stage One

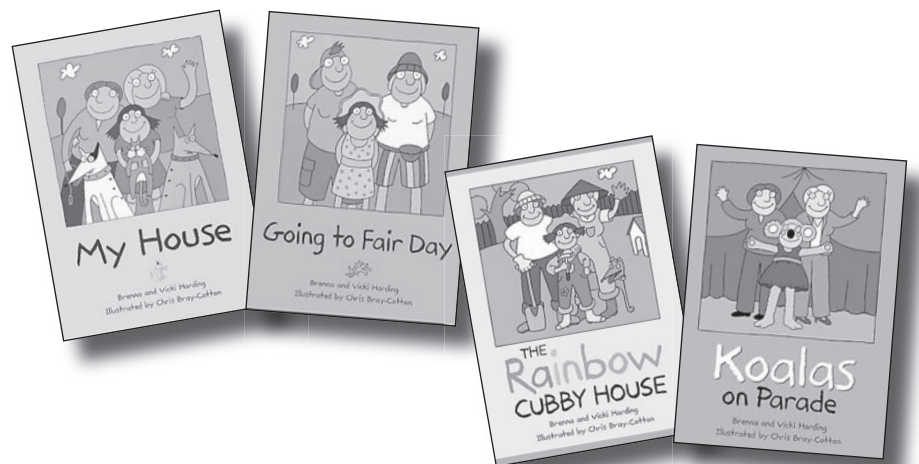
My House

Going to Fair Day

Stage One

The Rainbow Cubby House

Koalas on Parade



The 4 books in this series are told by a young girl with two mums. Each book relates a different everyday family experience - the family make-up is not the central theme. The books are suitable for children learning to read in the first three years of school and the level of difficulty increases slightly in each title.

Big Book:

The Rainbow Cubby House

Extra large sized book suitable for reading to a class.

Poster:

Families Come in All Shapes and Sizes

A2 sized full colour poster suitable for the classroom, library or bookshop. Ideal for helping to create a tolerant learning environment and an essential complement to, and ongoing reminder of, any family diversity lessons.

Teacher's Manual:

The manual contains a variety of teaching and learning activities that link to the key learning areas of Personal Development, Health and Physical Education and Human Society and its Environment. The activities included also provide opportunities for literacy skill development when used in the classroom in conjunction with the readers. The format of the activities are ready-to-use with blackline masters of worksheets and student resources included. The Teacher's Manual also includes background information about teaching diversity and acceptance, a handy questions and answers section and a list of further reading resources.

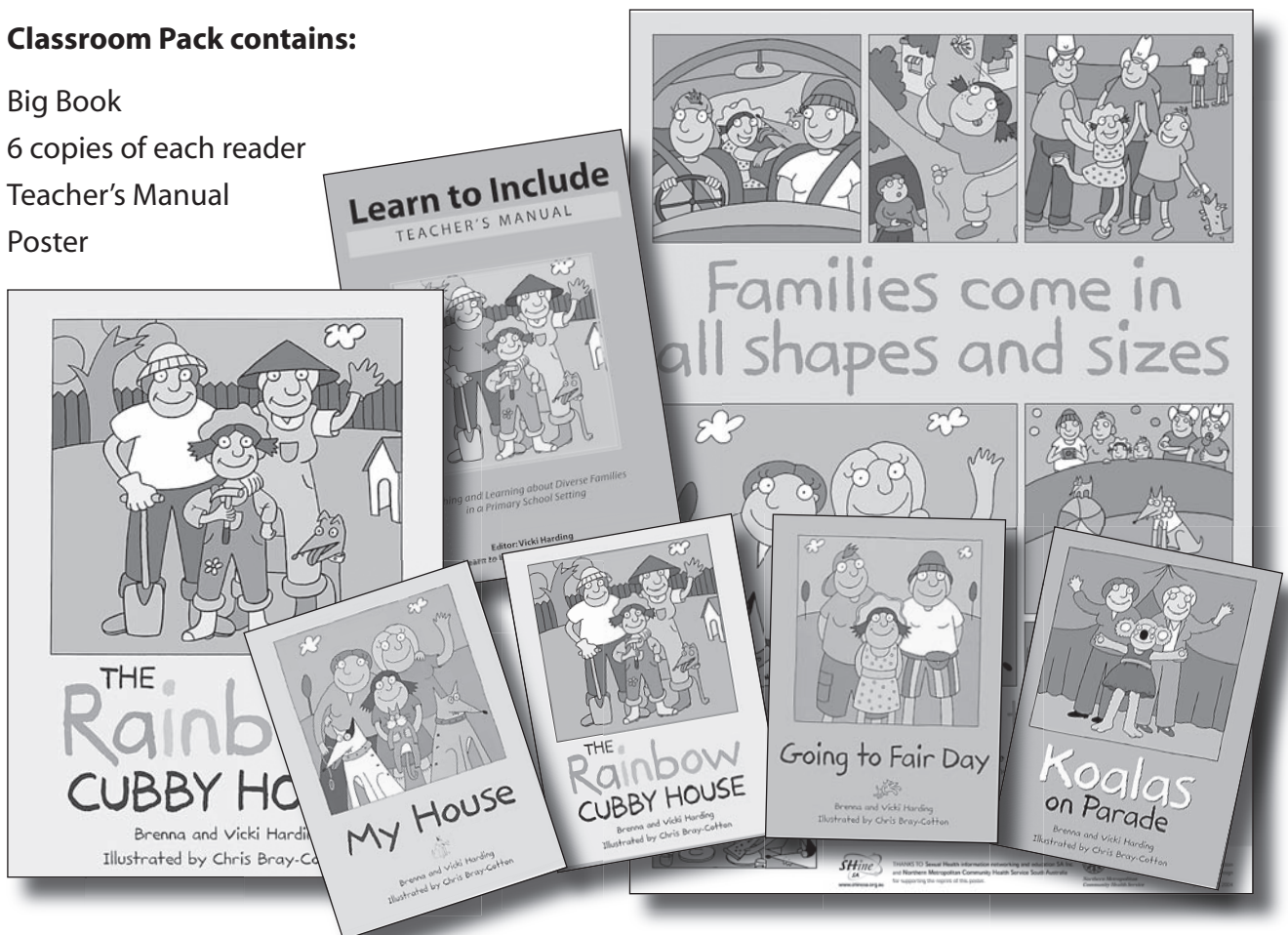
Classroom Pack contains:

Big Book

6 copies of each reader

Teacher's Manual

Poster



Syllabus Links

The teaching and learning activities in this Manual will provide opportunities for students to work towards Stage 1 outcomes from the NSW Board of Studies Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) K-6 Syllabus and the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K-6 Syllabus. A selection of the relevant Outcomes and Indicators are listed below.

Teaching and learning activities have also been developed for use in reading groups for each text in the *Learn to Include* series.

Human Society and Its Environment

Early Stage 1

Resource Systems

Relevant Outcome: SSES1: Identifies ways in which their own needs and the needs of others are met, individually and cooperatively.

Relevant Indicators:

- Identifies people who meet their needs and the needs of others
- Describes the structure of their own family

Stage 1

Roles, Rights and Responsibilities

Relevant Outcome: SSS1.8: Identifies roles and responsibilities within families, schools and the local community, and determines ways in which they should interact with others.

Relevant Indicators:

- Explains how the roles and responsibilities of family members meet family needs and that these can differ in families
- Examines the roles of male and female members within families
- Identifies different family structures, including their own, and the ways in which roles and responsibilities can vary, eg single-parent, extended, blended families, families with adopted children

Identity

Relevant Outcome: CUS1.3: Identifies customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions of their family and other families.

Relevant Indicator:

- Identifies characteristics that make another family different or similar to their own

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

Relevant Outcome: V2: Respects the right of others to hold different values and attitudes from their own

Relevant Indicator:

- Questions forms of discrimination against people on the grounds of their sex, race, marital status, sexuality or disability

Relevant Outcome: GDS1.9: Describes the characteristics that make them both similar to others and unique

Relevant Indicators:

- Discusses things they do well
- Demonstrates ways of encouraging and caring for others

Relevant Outcome: IRS1.11: Identifies the ways in which they communicate, cooperate and care for others

Relevant Indicators:

- Explains why different people are important to them
- Describes their families and other groups to which they belong

Relevant Outcome: INS1.3: Develops positive relationships with peers and other people

Relevant Indicator:

- Shows concern for the wellbeing of others

Integrated Curriculum Opportunities

The activities in this book have been designed for classroom use with the above syllabus outcomes in mind, but can also be used to work towards outcomes from other key learning areas. For example, *Learn to Include* resources can be used to help students work towards English, Creative and Practical Arts, Mathematics and Science and Technology outcomes in an integrated manner (see page 15 for a 'sample planning tool'). Developing an 'integrated curriculum'¹ or unit of work using these outcomes, activities and books, provides opportunities for further discussion and investigation into family diversity and children's daily lives.

In addition, *Learn to Include* resources can be referred to spontaneously, as children raise questions about family diversity.

Importantly, by using the *Learn to Include* resources in an integrated program, opportunities for critical thinking about society are enhanced.

¹ Hamston, J. & Murdoch, K. (1996). *Integrated Socially: Planning integrated units of work for social education*. Eleanor Curtin Publishing: Victoria.

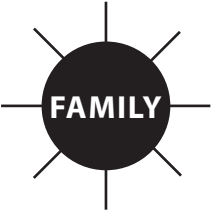
Human Society and Its Environment

Stage 1 Activities

Below are suggested activities that can be used in conjunction with *Learn to Include* resources to work toward HSIE outcomes. Please note that these activities also provide opportunities to work toward PDHPE and other key learning area outcomes, as shown by the example of a Integrated Curriculum Planning Tool on page 15.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes								
Whole Group	Brainstorm Who is in a family? Discussion Ask the students: Who makes up a family? Who makes up your family?	Accept all answers. Record. Lead students to various configurations.								
Small Groups	Role Play Students act out one of the stories using a variety of family models (eg mums, grandparents, close friends etc)	Concentrate on the positive feedback the adults are giving to the children.								
Whole Group/ Individual	Calendar Students make a calendar of special events that are celebrated by their family (eg birthdays, Fair Day, name days etc) Discuss why people celebrate – that it is a time to come together for a special reason.									
Individual	Matrix Ask students: What do people in your family do? Students draw a matrix of roles and responsibilities in their family.	For Example: <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Wash Up</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Tidy Room</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Feed Dog</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Cook Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Mum Me</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Me Brother</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Me</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Mum</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Wash Up	Tidy Room	Feed Dog	Cook Dinner	Mum Me	Me Brother	Me	Mum
Wash Up	Tidy Room	Feed Dog	Cook Dinner							
Mum Me	Me Brother	Me	Mum							

Human Society and Its Environment Stage 1 Activities (Continued)

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Small Groups	Semantic Map (mind map/concept map) <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div>	Pass each map from group to group to add further ideas about "family".
Individual	Kinship Maps (Family Trees) Students draw their own Kinship Map.	Use radiate rather than linear format - start with student as focus and include very important people in their life. Inform parents, request assistance if required.
Small Groups	Flow Chart Read one of the books in the <i>Learn to Include</i> series. Ask the students to discuss the sequence of events. Students design/draw a flow chart to show what happened.	Model a variety of flow charts (visual and text based).

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

Stage 1 Activity Session

Below are suggested activities that can be used in conjunction with *Learn to Include* resources to work toward PDHPE outcomes. Please note that these activities also provide opportunities to work toward HSIE and other key learning area outcomes.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Whole Class	Read <i>The Rainbow Cubby House</i> big book to the class then ask students to give you words to describe the family in the book. Ask the class to identify characteristics that are similar to their own family. Write the words on the board.	Emphasise to students that they should identify characteristics that are similar to their own family and encourage positive responses.
Small Groups	Separate the class into small groups and ask them to describe their family to each other, including the things they do together and how they show they care for each other. Ask each group to nominate a person who will report back to the whole class.	Let the small groups self select the spokesperson so that any child who might be anxious about sharing personal details with a large group, does not have to.
Whole Class	Ask the small groups to come back to the main class and one student to report back to the class on the range of answers in their group. Record any new words on the board.	Give positive feedback if a spokesperson reports that someone has a family with same-sex parents - refer back to <i>The Rainbow Cubby House</i> .

My House and Going to Fair Day Mid Stage 1 - Literacy Activities

Below are suggested literacy activities to use in conjunction with *My House* and *Going to Fair Day* in reading groups. Please note that some of these activities include opportunities to work toward PDHPE and HSIE outcomes.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Individual	Students complete missing word activity: Worksheet 1	See Worksheet 1 (page 16).
Individual	Students draw and label their own family: Worksheet 2	See Worksheet 2 (page 17).
Individual	Students complete cloze activities: Worksheet 3	See Worksheet 3 (page 18).
Individual	Students complete a story map of <i>Going to Fair Day</i> : Worksheet 4	See Worksheet 4 (page 19).
Individual	Students list all food that might be found at Fair Day: Worksheet 5	See Worksheet 5 (page 20).
Small Groups	Students make a poster to advertise Fair Day	Ask students to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening times • Location • Activities available • Transport Information • Stalls

The Rainbow Cubby House

Late Stage 1 - Literacy Activities

Below are suggested literacy activities to use in conjunction with *The Rainbow Cubby House* in reading groups. Please note that some of these activities include opportunities to work toward PDHPE and HSIE outcomes.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Pairs	Students talk to a friend about the cover of <i>The Rainbow Cubby House</i> then predict the story. Students then read the book and discuss before completing Worksheet 6.	See Worksheet 6 (page 21) - cloze activity based on the first half of the book.
Small Group	Students discuss verbs in groups and then complete Activity 2 on Worksheet 7.	See Activity 2 on Worksheet 7 (page 22) - verb exercises.
Small Group	Students discuss onomatopoeic words in small groups. Students then complete Activity 3 on Worksheet 7.	Onomatopoeia is the formation of a word whose sound suggests its meaning eg crash, bang. See Activity 3 on Worksheet 7 (page 22) - onomatopoeic words exercises.
Small Group	Procedural writing. Ask students to discuss the order in which a rainbow cubby would be built. They then complete Worksheet 8.	See Worksheet 8 (page 23) - planning to build a rainbow cubby, including a diagram.
Individual	Students complete the Worksheet 9 comprehension exercise.	See Worksheet 9 (page 24) - comprehension questions.

Koalas On Parade

Late Stage 1 - Literacy Activities

Below are suggested literacy activities to use in conjunction with *Koalas on Parade* in reading groups. Please note that some of these activities include opportunities to work toward PDHPE and HSIE outcomes.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Whole Group	<p>Orientation Read <i>Koalas on Parade</i>. Ask students: What are the celebrations your family takes part in? Have you been involved in a celebration where you needed to dress up? What have you dressed up as?</p> <p>Students complete Activity 1 on Worksheet 10 – sequencing activity.</p>	See Activity 1 on Worksheet 10 (page 25).
Individual	<p>Text type and verbs groups. Students complete Worksheet 10 – verb groups.</p>	<p>Present tense verbs are used in recounts See Activity 2 on Worksheet 10 (page 25).</p>
Small Group	<p>Ask students to find the adjectives in the story. Ask students: Where do the adjectives appear? What is their purpose?</p> <p>Students complete Worksheet 11 – draw and label main character.</p>	See Worksheet 11 (page 26).
Small Group	<p>Ask students to list some other school celebrations. Ask students: When do these events happen?</p> <p>Complete Worksheet 12 - cloze activity.</p>	See Worksheet 12 (page 27).

Koalas On Parade

Late Stage 1 - Literacy Activities (Continued)

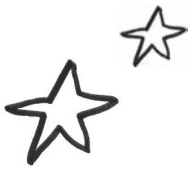
Below are suggested literacy activities to use in conjunction with *Koalas on Parade* in reading groups. Please note that some of these activities include opportunities to work toward PDHPE and HSIE outcomes.

Suggested Activities		Teaching Notes
Whole Group	<p>Ask the students: Who has come to watch the main character in the parade? Who else may be in the audience for school events? What are their reasons for being there?</p> <p>Students complete the Worksheet 13 true/false questions and drawing activity.</p>	<p>See Worksheet 13 (page 28) - comprehension questions.</p>

Sample: Integrated Curriculum Planning Tool

This matrix summarises a number of teaching and learning opportunities. The information presented here can be transferred to a curriculum document illustrating both assessable learning outcomes and incidental outcomes. Evaluation of assessable outcomes will enable further planning through a range of Key Learning Areas. These can be linked with reading groups, independent studies and interest based learning opportunities.

KLA	Outcomes Early Stage 1 & Stage 1	Experiences & Resources	Teaching & Learning Strategies
English	WS1.13 Identifies how own texts differ according to their purpose, audience and subject matter.		Whole Group
Human Society and Its Environment	CCS1.1 Communicates the importance of past and present people, days and events in their life, in the lives of family and community members and in other communities.	Brainstorm Who is in a family? Discussion Ask the students: Who makes up a family? Who makes up your family?	Accept all answers. Record. Lead students to various configurations.
Creative & Practical Arts	DRAES1.3 Dramatises personal experiences using movement, space and objects. DRAES1.2 Conveys story, depicts events and expresses feelings by using the elements of drama and the expressive skills of movement and voice.	Role Play Students act out one of the stories using a variety of family models (eg mums, Grandparents, close friends etc)	Small groups: Concentrate on the positive feedback the adults are giving to the children.
Mathematics	MES1.5 Sequences events and uses everyday language to describe the duration of activities. WMS1.3 Describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols.	Calendar Students make a calendar of special events that are celebrated by their family (eg birthdays, Fair Day, name days etc) Discuss why people celebrate – that it is a time to come together for a special reason.	Whole group/ individual or ongoing experience throughout the year
Science & Technology	SSS1.8 Identifies roles and responsibilities within families, schools and the local community, and determines ways in which they should interact with others.		



Worksheet 1 - My House



Fill in the missing words.

There _ _ _ lots of
_ _ _ _ at _ _ _ house
and a _ _ _ tree I _ _ _
climb while my _ _ _ _
work in the garden.

Your words:

are, mums, big, can,
bugs, our



*Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from
Newtown Public School, 2005.*

Worksheet 2 - My House and Going to Fair Day

Draw and label your family.

A large rectangular area defined by a double-line border, intended for drawing and labeling a family.



Worksheet 3 - My House



1. Unjumble these words from *My House*.
Each word starts with the **bold** letter.



trsnia _____

sssihe _____

ksabr _____

hsaec _____

aipzz _____

sdgo _____

1. Word endings: change these words by adding 's', 'ed' and 'ing' to each word. Write the new words.

Add 's'

Add 'ed'

Add 'ing'

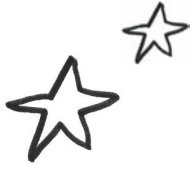
play _____

cheer _____

climb _____

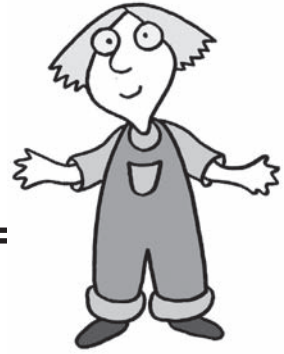
jump _____

*Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from
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Worksheet 4 - Going to Fair Day

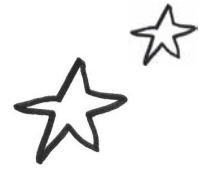
Story Map - *Going to Fair Day*



1.	2.
3.	4.
5.	6.

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Worksheet 6 - The Rainbow Cubby House Activity 1



Text Type

Talk to a friend about the cover of the book. Predict the text type.
Read the book. Discuss.

Use the Following words to complete the story from
The Rainbow Cubby House:

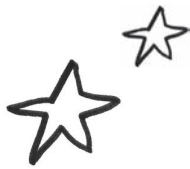
**are, be, it, working, bending, carrying, with, find, other, to,
and, is, of**

Today my mums and I _____ working in our back yard.
Jed _____ coming over with his two dads. We are all
going _____ make a cubby house. We've got hammers
_____ nails and a shed full _____ wood.

There's the doorbell! It must _____ Jed and his dads.
I can hear their dog, Scout, barking. Our dog Jack is barking too.
Jed is _____ tinsel and lights and his dad has a ladder.

What should we start _____ ? Wood, lots of wood.
Let's get _____ out of the shed. My mums begin with
the floor and Jed's dads are _____ on the sides. Jed and
I try to hammer the nails, but they keep _____ over.

The dogs love our back yard. They _____ an old pair of
pants in the shed. Jack has one leg and Scout has
the _____. Rrrr...ip!



Worksheet 7 - The Rainbow Cubby House Activity 2



Verbs

A verb is a doing word. Discuss verbs in a group.

1. List 10 verbs you have found in the book.

2. Word endings: change these words by adding 's', 'ed' and 'ing' to each word. Write the new words.

	Add 's'	Add 'ed'	Add 'ing'
bark	_____	_____	_____
work	_____	_____	_____
decide	_____	_____	_____
paint	_____	_____	_____

Activity 3

Onomatopoeic words

Onomatopoeia is the formation of a word whose sound suggests its meaning.

Discuss onomatopoeic words eg crash, bang.

List onomatopoeic words from the text.

Add words that you can think of to this list.

Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Worksheet 8 - The Rainbow Cubby House

Activity 4

Procedural Writing



Building a rainbow cubby would need a plan.

Discuss the order in which it would be built.

Write a list of instructions on how to build a rainbow cubby.

Include a diagram.

A large, empty rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for drawing a diagram of the rainbow cubby house.

Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Worksheet 9 - The Rainbow Cubby House

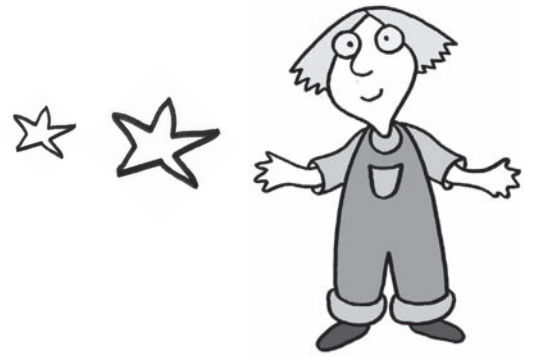
Activity 5

Comprehension

Answer the following:

The mums and dads build the cubby.

What do the children do?



Why do the nails bend when the children try to hammer them?

What are the names of the dogs?

Who cooks the potato wedges?

Have you ever built anything?

What did you build and who helped you?

Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Worksheet 10 - Koalas on Parade

Activity 1



Sequencing

Place a number next to the following statements to indicate the correct order:

My mums give me a hug

Ms Tran's welcome

Little girl yells "Binky!"

Grade 1 children parade

Principal announces winners

Jed is on stage with his dog

Koalas go up on stage



Activity 2



What kind of text is this story? Is it a narrative, a report or a recount?

Find 5 verb groups.

What tenses are the verb groups? _____

Write 5 sentences using the verb groups.

Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Worksheet 11 - Koalas on Parade

Activity 3



1. Draw the main character in the story.
Label her costume.



2. Draw a costume you would wear.
Label it.

Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Worksheet 12 - Koalas on Parade

Activity 4



These phrases from the story are jumbled.
Write them so that they make sense.



big fluffy ears. wearing a black nose and I've painted my face grey
and am

I spot another koala go over to have a closer look. Across the room
and

audience and Hannah does a little I throw gum leaves into the koala
dance.

Hannah's mask falls off. We are laughing so much that

At the end of the parade to announce the winners. our Principal
comes onto the stage

gets ready to announce the first prize, my Mums cross their As Ms
Tran fingers.



Worksheet 13 - Koalas on Parade

Activity 5



Comprehension

1. Select true or false for the following statements:

Jed was dressed as a snake

TRUE/FALSE

The main character had two mums

TRUE/FALSE

The parade went down the main street

TRUE/FALSE

Everyone in the audience was eating lollipops

TRUE/FALSE

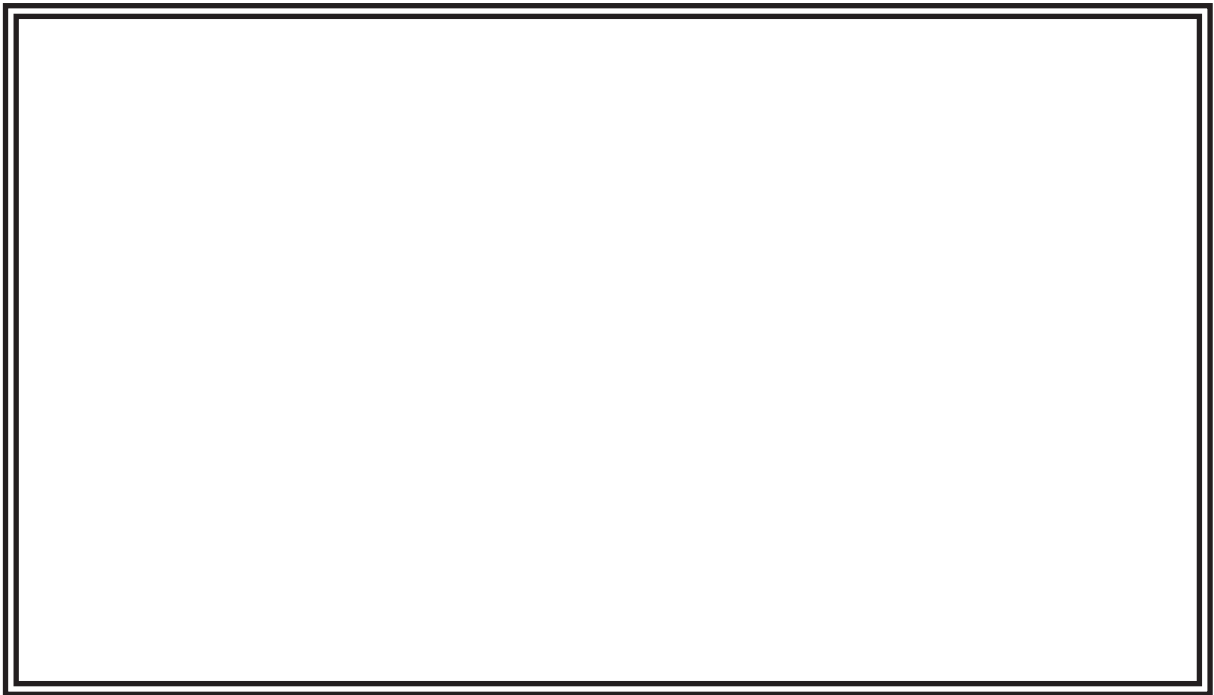
There was more than one fairy in the parade

TRUE/FALSE

The winners wore witch costumes

TRUE/FALSE

2. Draw the stage and the people on it at some point through the parade.



Learn to Include Teaching and Learning Activities designed in collaboration with teachers from Newtown Public School, 2005.

Teaching Family Diversity to Young Children

Issues for Teachers

What issues do those working with young children face in deciding whether to take an inclusive approach to family diversity?

Contributors to this paper: Elizabeth Dau, Patrick Hughes, Glenda Mac Naughton, Margaret Coady. This Paper draws on Miller, M. (2003) "What do gay and lesbian issues have to do with early childhood?"

Issue 1: young children meet lesbian and gay people in their lives

Young children are likely to meet lesbian and gay people among their parents, teachers, early childhood staff, family and friends. It is generally believed that ten per cent of the population identifies itself as 'non-heterosexual' and so some parents will fall into that category and some young children will grow up to identify themselves as gay or lesbian.

Some questions facing those working with young children:

- Should we ignore the reality of many young children's lives by ignoring the fact that they will know and meet lesbian and gay family members and friends?
- Should we ignore nearly 10% of the population in the materials we offer to young children about family life?

Issue 2: for some young children lesbian and gay families are their normality

Sexuality is a complex topic that can sometimes be a sensitive and contentious topic among adults. Many parents and teachers believe that young children are innocents, who can't understand the complexities of sexual matters. For these adults, sexuality has no place in a young child's life - whether in schools, childcare centres, in the media or elsewhere - and so they seek to prevent young children from encountering what they regard as expressions of sexuality.

That clear – and clear-cut – view of children and sexuality becomes complicated and contradictory in practice. A 2004 episode of the ABC's Play School program which included a scene of a child with two mums, produced media controversy and government response. Critics of the episode seemed to believe that heterosexuality is the only valid choice, because it is normal and anything else is abnormal and deviant. In short: under the guise of protecting 'innocents' from sexuality, these critics actively encourage children to be heterosexist (to see heterosexuality as right and every other sexuality as wrong) and to be homophobic (fearful or hateful of 'non-heterosexual' people).

Some questions facing those working with young children and their families:

- Should we stop children who live in lesbian and gay families from talking about their families?
- What does it mean for children who live in lesbian and gay families to have their family lives considered abnormal?
- What ethical responsibility do we have to all children to respect their family lives in all their diversity?

Issue 3: lesbian and gay families face discrimination

Gays and lesbians face personal and social discrimination, including verbal and physical stereotyping, harassment and abuse; and, legal discrimination in areas such as property rights, inheritance rights and rights associated with being a (heterosexual) spouse and/or parent. Young children need to know that some people face such discrimination and that they are likely to meet such people in their everyday life. There is evidence (McNair 2004) that many children in lesbian families encounter bullying because of their parents' sexuality. In a Victorian study cited by McNair, just under half of children in such families in grades 3 to 6 had been teased, bullied or faced homophobic language because of belonging to families with gay fathers or lesbian mothers. As a result many children are unwilling to disclose details of their family.

In spite of such stigmatisation and bullying, children in lesbian families are both remarkably resilient and tolerant. McNair cites evidence which suggests that this resilience and tolerance is the result of the lesbian parents deliberately teaching their children to be proud of their family, and accepting of diversity. One concern held by many who are worried about the portrayal of lesbian or gay families in children's books and in the media viewed by children is that it will encourage children to themselves adopt a gay or lesbian identity. It is probably true that such portrayals will lead to more open acknowledgement of sexual identity, but in the studies overviewed by McNair (p57) the prevalence of homosexual orientation was the same in the children in lesbian and non-lesbian families.

Another concern of such critics is that children will suffer from the lack of a father. McNair points out that the literature on children's development being adversely affected by the lack of a father is based on studies of breakdowns of nuclear families where violence and previous attachments were factors. She also points out (McNair p60) that many lesbian families take care to connect with extended family and to provide models of different genders and sexualities, thus making it less likely that the children will suffer from lack of the resources which could be provided by a father.

Teachers and carers who might otherwise wish to challenge heterosexism and homophobia in their school – as they challenge other forms of discrimination – can be wary of addressing the issue, especially where none of the parents or staff identify as homosexual. However, children can benefit from living in an anti-heterosexist environment, irrespective of whether any particular adults around them identify as gay or lesbian, just as they can benefit from an environment that actively challenges racism and sexism. They can broaden their understanding of the diversity of human relationships and strengthen their commitment to equity and fairness.

Some questions facing those who work with young children:

- Should we encourage children to challenge all forms of discrimination?
- What limits should we place on what children learn about diversity?

Responding respectfully to the issues

A respectful response to the questions about lesbian and gay families in primary schools starts by respecting the diverse ways in which families live their lives. In practice, this means finding ways to create a classroom environment where all children feel that their families are respected and where all children can learn to respect diversity. Some simple ways to do this follow:

- Offer children stories and games (and television programs) of people in various forms of relationships, including different sorts of families
- Include pictures of notable lesbians and gay men among the images around the school
- Use open-ended and gender-neutral play materials
- Arrange play materials in particular spaces (e.g. home corner, block corner) in different ways and encourage children to play differently with them
- Challenge children's and adults' discriminatory behaviour.

It's also important that all adults feel respected in a school environment. Some simple ways to do this follow:

- Don't assume that someone (child or adult) is or will be of a particular sexuality
- Make a particular point of discussing the program with parents or staff who identify as gay or lesbian
- Recognise the work being done by lesbian and gay parents to encourage tolerance in their children
- Where and when appropriate, discuss diversity, difference and discrimination with children and adults
- Use inclusive spoken and written language (e.g. "parent" or "carer" rather than "mother" and "father"; "dominant" or "widespread" rather than "normal") wherever possible
- Include in your publicity, etc. images of people in relationships other than heterosexual nuclear families
- Challenge children's and adults' discriminatory language.

Inspirational quotes to encourage discussion and debate about the issues in this paper.

The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities.

John (Lord) Dalberg-Acton (English historian and theologian, 1834-1902)

No government has the right to tell its citizens when or whom to love. The only queer people are those who don't love anybody.

Rita Mae Brown (U.S. novelist, 1944-)

As professionals who work with families, our willingness to talk openly about identity and to help foster a positive sense of self in children can make an enormous difference in affirming the rich diversity of our human community and helping children make bridges across cultures and traditions. ... The more that children have a solid grounding and understanding about who they are and where they came from, the more they learn to move with grace and confidence among communities different from their own, and the closer we get to building a world of respect, curiosity, sharing, and humanity.

(Adapted from *A Place to Begin: Working With Parents on Issues of Diversity*, by Dora Pulido-Tobiassen and Janet Gonzalez-Mena, reprinted by California Tomorrow.)

Our mission is to foster the growth of daughters and sons of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents of all racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds by providing education, support and community on local and international levels, to advocate for our rights and those of our families, and to promote acceptance and awareness in society that love makes a family.

(Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere [COLAGE]).

References:

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) is the only national and international organisation in the world specifically supporting young people with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender parents. A helpful website with resources and good links: <http://www.colage.org>

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Resources & Further Reading

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www.girl.org.au/pdf/major_reports/meet_the_parents.pdf

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Redress: Journal of the Association of Women Educators, special edition on "Sexuality and Education", Volume 9, No 2, Sept 2000

Beckett, Dr Lori (ed) Everyone is Special! A Handbook for Teachers on Sexuality Education. Can be purchased through the Australian Women's Educator website: www.awe.asn.au

NSW Anti-Homophobia Interagency Resource Listing: Affirming Sexual Diversity and Addressing Homophobia in Schools (2004). Available via email from Learn to Include. Request via Learn_to_include@hotmail.net.au

Websites:

For a summary of the law in relation to gays and lesbians in NSW (including as parents): www.actsofpassion.nsw.gov.au

Tasmanian Department of Education, Challenging homophobia:
www.education.tas.gov.au/equitystandards/discrimination/support/homophobia.htm#Background

Creating Safe Schools, Family Planning Victoria: www.ssafeschools.org.au/resources/5_creating%20safe%20schools.pdf

USA site about organising equity programs in public education:
<http://www.personproject.org/Handbook/contents.html>

A USA based site offering support for people with gay or lesbian parents:
<http://www.familieslikemine.com/index.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a sample of questions that teachers may be asked by young students when diverse family structures are included in classroom teaching. Possible answers are also suggested.

How can lesbians have babies?

Lesbians have the reproductive organs to give birth in the same way as heterosexual women. Some lesbians have children while they are in a relationship with a man, and the children come to live or stay with them in their new relationship with a woman. Sometimes lesbians have a male friend help them to get pregnant. And sometimes lesbians visit a doctor to get help to become pregnant.

How can two men have a baby?

Sometimes a man may have children with a woman partner, the relationship finishes and then the man decides he loves another man. When this happens the children may visit or live with their father and his new male partner.

Another way two men can have a baby is by adopting a baby.

How does someone know if they are gay or lesbian?

When people are old enough to be in a relationship, they will know who they would like to be in a relationship with. Sometimes people will know that they are attracted to a person of the same sex when they are in their late teen years. Some find out when they are older or younger. Sometimes they will discover this only after they have been in a heterosexual relationship for some time. Some people may be attracted to people of the same sex at some times of their life and to the opposite sex at others.

Who would get the baby/child if a same sex relationship finished?

When any relationship finishes, the parents decide where the child will live, depending on where they want to live, where their school is and many other factors. It is the same in a relationship between same sex parents. Usually the separating parents will agree on what is best for the child, taking into account what the child wants if they are old enough to decide. This may mean that the child lives with one or the other of the parents, or that they live with each parent for some of the time.

Will a child with same sex parents be gay too?

Research has shown that same sex parents mostly have heterosexual children - the sexuality of parents does not seem to influence the sexuality of the children. Same sex parents, as well as heterosexual parents, usually care most that their children are happy adults, not whether they are heterosexual or homosexual.

Training and further information

FPA Health, based in Sydney, offer a course called *Birds and Bees*. This training is conducted in various areas of NSW. For dates and locations visit www.fpahealth.org.au.

It's Elementary is an outstanding American documentary about work being done in primary schools to challenge homophobia. It showcases teachers working with young students in the classroom, giving the viewer an idea of issues that may arise when teaching about diverse family structures. It is available from Heathcliff distributors. More information can be found on www.heathcliff.com.au

The NSW Teacher's Federation has an extensive collection of gay and lesbian material available for loan by Federation members.

About Learn to Include

Learn to Include (LTI) is a non-profit organisation which publishes a range of early educational resources to raise children's awareness of families with same sex parents. These resources are produced to support informed and inclusive teaching, to help children understand and value diversity and to challenge the homophobic prejudice that some children experience in their community. Funders include the NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW local councils (Marrickville, South Sydney and Blue Mountains), ACON, The Pratt Foundation, Lesbians Incorporated, Aurora, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and the 2000 Lesbian Parenting Conference. The project is auspiced by the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service and supported by a number of very capable and caring people. Please see the website www.hotkey.net.au/~learn_to_include for further information.



Australian primary school students come from a variety of cultural, racial, religious and family backgrounds, and it is generally accepted that this variety will be reflected in the contemporary classroom. However, the focus of teaching and learning, particularly when exploring family backgrounds, is given to the two-parent nuclear family form. Families that fall outside of this norm, especially families with same sex parents, are often overlooked because of a lack of Australian resources for teaching family diversity to primary students. Without resources to support the teaching of family diversity, teachers can find themselves at a loss as to the best way to deal with these issues. All students benefit from learning about diversity, and some students will also feel their home life has been validated when diverse family relationships are included in classroom activities and resources.

This manual, developed by **Learn to Include** with support from the NSW Attorney General's Department and the NSW Department of Education and Training, is designed to assist teachers to begin to explore family diversity in K-3 classrooms.



ISBN 0-9581290-4-5



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