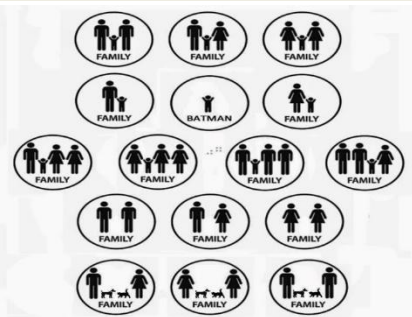


January 2023

MONONGALIA COUNTY SCHOOLS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION NEWSLETTER

“FAMILIES COME IN DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES”



This month we celebrate our families in MCS and all the shapes and sizes they come in

In today's world families come in all shapes and sizes. There is no longer one definition of what a family should look like.

The thought used to be that the typical family had a mom and a dad and kid(s). That is still what a family can look like, there are many different ways that families can look. In Monongalia County Schools we have families with just one parent, with a step-parent or two, being raised by grandparents or other relatives, two moms, two dads, foster parents, adoptive parents, friends, etc.



Research has shown that between the ages of 2-5, children become aware of differences, such as gender, ethnicity, disabilities-even differences in family structures.

Being able to talk about differences is beneficial for children's identity development, while also fostering a sense of curiosity and appreciation for other people. We are teaching our students about respect for others.

When we are honoring diverse families in the classroom it helps children feel included in their learning environment. When children are able to see that their family- the ones that they love the most in the world- are valued and seen by their teachers and others in school, it helps to send the message that they belong in the classroom.

There are many times that a story a teacher reads ends with, "good night mom, goodnight dad" While that may not cause any initial thoughts, to the child that is living with something different it may.

This month throughout the schools in Monongalia county, schools will find ways of making sure all students and their families feel welcomed in our schools.

January Observations

- No Name-Calling Week
- Korean American Day-January 13th
- National Religious Freedom Day-January 16th

For questions or more information please contact:

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GUARDIAN CORNER

LOOK BACK AT LAST MONTH

GUARDIAN CORNER *The Guardian corner is optional reading for parents that are looking for additional resources or ideas at home. Monongalia county schools in only providing optional resources and respects everyone’s differences*

We live in a world of different family configurations, beliefs, cultural norms and personal practices. All families have their own uniqueness about them and children should feel about that. We should help them feel good about their own family as well as learning to accept, respect and include others with a different experience.

Diverse families are becoming more and more common. Children are aware and observant of this. This can lead to questions from your child about non-traditional families. There are many simple ways that you can help teach your child about diverse families.

Here are a few ideas to help your conversation with your child:

1. **Keep it simple-** There is no need to go into long and complex answers with your child. Something simple like, “Zack lives with his grandfather and his grandfather is his family” is good enough. Younger kids are not ready for philosophical discussions.

As your children become older you can have more in depth conversations with them, but when they are younger try and keep it simple.

2. **Celebrate diversity-** As children are increasing their awareness of family structures engage them in conversations about who is apart of their family, who lives in their house and who takes care of them.

This is a great opportunity to talk about other families and the diversity of other families.

3. **Define what makes a family-** Children do well when they come to understand there are varying family structures and all families are wonderful, as long as the people in them love and care about each other. This helps them feel secure even if their family structure changes.

If your child ask, “Can a family have two mommies or daddies?” A suggested response is “ Yes, families may have two mommies, one mommy, no mommy or even lots of mommies. Some families also include grandparents, aunt, uncles, etc. It is love that makes a family—just like our family.”

Things you can do with your older child

While, most advice is geared towards younger children there are still things you can do if you have older children.

- All kids, even older ones have questions. As questions come up make sure you that you are responding to their questions and comments. Even if you are unsure, by not responding it can be interpreted that it is not okay to talk about differences. You can always come back to the comment or question at a later time too, if you do not have an answer ready.
- Don’t let prejudicial remarks your child may make go by without intervening. Even with older kids it is still important for them to know those comments are not okay and hurtful and wrong.
- Try and expose your child to role models from their own culture as well as others. You can point out the different family structure that those individuals grew up in.
- Model the behaviors and attitudes that you want your child to develop. Even when your child is older they are still learning from you. Pay attention to moments or situations that could promote your child’s openness to diversity.

Preview to next Month

February is “Advocate for Rights”

This month will focus on what it means to advocate for rights. Throughout history there have been many significant events that have shaped who we are as a nation. From the Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Rights Movement, Disability Rights Movement, Title IX, etc Advocacy is a part of our history and will continue to play a big part of our future. Students have always learned about these events and will continue to learn about the events that helped shape our country.

Last Month

In December, Suncrest celebrated “Superheroes all over the World.” Each grade level studied a different winter holiday celebrated by various cultures such as Kwanzaa and Hanukkah. Then the students shared our their research and knowledge with other grade levels.

Students brought in ornaments to represent their culture or family traditions and we decorated the holiday trees that lined our school entrance with these items.

Our 2nd Grade students spread holiday cheer by caroling at Assisted Living at Evergreen.

We also celebrated the holidays with our school-wide PBIS reward. Students redeemed Star Cards for a fun afternoon filled with popcorn, hot cocoa and time spent together.



Librarian’s Corner:

We celebrate and represent families of all shapes and sizes in our school library! Here are some great books in our collection that reflect the diversity of families in our community:

LaCour, Nina. "Mama and Mommy and Me in the Middle." (2022). Ages 3-7.

Kaepernick, Colin. "I Color Myself Different!" (2022). Ages 4-8.

Khan, Hana. "Under My Hijab." (2019). Ages 4-7.

Martinez-Neal, Juana. "Alma and How She Got Her Name." (2018). Ages 4-8.

Ho, Joanna. "Eyes That Speak to the Stars." (2022). Ages 4-8.

Terciero, Rey. "Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy: A Modern Graphic Retelling of Little Women." (2019). Grades 3-7.

Keller, Tae. "When You Trap a Tiger." (2020). Grades 3-7.

O'Connor, Barbara. "How to Steal a Dog." (2007). Grades 3-6.

What’s happening in January?

In January, we are celebrating the fact that “**Superhero Families Come in Different Shapes and Sizes.**” Students will be learning about how families aren’t always a mom and a dad but can be made up of multiple moms, dads, grandparents, foster parents, and many other loving members. Some grade levels are reading books about different family units while others are discussing why it’s important to respect and value others’ family members. Staff this year have been working hard at replacing the word *parents* with *families*. This is a more inclusive term that addresses all living situations rather than specifically stating parents. We will focus on the fact that **love** is what makes a family.

Family trees and webs are something that many grade levels may introduce this month to explore our students’ differences and to allow for students to learn more about each other. We have so many different family dynamics in our school, and allowing students opportunities to learn about them increases everyone’s understanding. It also helps break down and dispose of any biases students may have towards family dynamics that differ from theirs. With many families of Asian descent at Suncrest, we will also be celebrating the Chinese New Year. Students will learn about traditions and celebrations that take place around this holiday!

