

Where Everyone Belongs: Celebrating Difference in Early Learning and Child Care

Early learning settings can help children learn about identity, fairness, inclusion, and community through stories, materials, play, and conversations that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. This supports the principle of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism in *Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework* ([NSELCE](#)).

When educators create welcoming and inclusive spaces, children, families, and community members feel seen, valued, and safe. Learning environments that reflect many lived experiences and identities help children build curiosity, empathy, and strong relationships with others and the world around them.

Educators play an important role in learning about and respecting the rights, languages, cultures, experiences, and identities of children, families and colleagues. This helps ensure that all children, families, and colleagues feel that they belong.

To support inclusive learning, the Early Learning and Child Care Branch has sent the book *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by Sara O'Leary to each regulated child care program and family home child care agency.



Invitations and Provocations

This month's issue explores opportunities to deepen children's understanding of family, identity, and belonging through learning experiences inspired by *A Family Is a Family Is a Family* by Sara O'Leary, provided to your program.

All About Me, All About Us: As outlined in the [Educator's Guide](#), children feel safe, secure, and supported when educators intentionally create spaces that recognize diverse identities, expressions, and family experiences, enabling children to explore and express who they are.

Reflect: What opportunities do children have to express who they are? How do children demonstrate curiosity about differences in identity, expression, and family life?

Plan: Provide mirrors, various colours of paper, and inclusive art materials (diverse skin-tone materials, yarn, fabric, etc.). Invite children to create self-portraits or "All About Me" representations. Include the book '*A Family Is a Family Is a Family*' for children to engage with. Offer open-ended prompts such as:

- What makes you who you are?
- Who are the people in your life who love and care for you?
- What makes your family special?

Observe: Notice how children represent themselves and their families. What language or interactions emerge when children see their own and others' identities and experiences reflected in the book and among their peers?

Families Grow in Many Ways: The [Educator's Guide](#) affirms that children learn to interact with others with care, empathy, and respect when environments are intentionally organized and designed to accurately reflect diversity in race, culture, gender identity, and family structure.

Reflect: How do children describe their families? What language do they use to talk about love, care, and belonging?

Plan: Provide loose parts (e.g., wooden figures, blocks, stones, fabric, small homes, etc.) for children to create representations of their families. Read '*A Family Is a Family Is a Family*' to reinforce that families are defined by love, not structure. Offer open-ended prompts such as:

- What makes you feel safe, happy, and cared for and who are the people who help create those feelings for you?
- What is something special about your family?
- What does your family like to do together?

Observe: Listen to how children define "family." Notice who or what children include in their family representations. Notice how children interact with their peers' family creations. Do they show curiosity, empathy, or ask questions?

Inquiries about this resource can be emailed to the Sector Development and Partnerships team at ECDSERVICES@novascotia.ca.