

# Adoption Friendly Curriculum

“Draw your family tree.” “Research your ancestry in a term paper.” “Bring a baby picture to post on the bulletin board.” Seemingly innocent, common school assignments turn into landmines for adopted and foster children. Just as children are coming to understand the full implications of adoption, a classroom project can increase vulnerability and trigger unresolved feelings.

- For foster children, feelings of not belonging can be triggered.
- When lacking family information, children may feel that *they* are the missing piece that is out of place, according to psychologist David Brodzinsky, and adoption expert.
- Open adoptions in which birth family information is accessible does not remove the inherent loss issues that are central to all adoption.
- Inevitable comparisons with peers can lead to feeling “all wrong.”
- The public classroom setting – reading aloud a child’s paper or posting baby photographs on the bulletin board – can heighten feelings of being different from others.

For trans-racially adopted children who are required to write a paper about genealogy, race presents further complexities. While some children are happy to explore their racial or ethnic heritage, others are ambivalent, resisting being pegged as being and looking different. The child may feel caught between feeling disloyal to the adoptive family and feeling guilt for denying the essence of “who I am.”

## A Proactive Approach

Together, teachers and parents can revamp curriculum to be inclusive of all children. This effort doesn’t mean that the teacher must create a special curriculum to accommodate adopted or foster children, but rather that lessons be enlarged to accommodate a wide variety of family conditions.

In designing adoption-sensitive assignments, educational professionals can start by considering a child’s developmental age in relationship to their understanding of adoption, divorce or other life situations. Include books, software and additional resources that enlarge the definition of “family” and that match the child’s understanding of their unique family situation. Provide assignments about adoption that non-adopted children as well as adopted children could choose to do.

### Resources:

The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc.  
Celebrate Adoption  
Fair Families Adopting in Response

[www.adoptionsupport.org](http://www.adoptionsupport.org)  
[www.celebrateadoption.org](http://www.celebrateadoption.org)  
[www.fairfamilies.org](http://www.fairfamilies.org)