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## Updating Classic Homework Assignments

Homework should foster respect for diversity and be sensitive to each child's life story. Reviewing some classic concepts and tasks to achieve this goal is necessary. Some of the changes required so that all students feel welcome and included in the classroom involve using appropriate language, revising libraries and resources, and eliminating stereotypes. Adopted and fostered persons have a family narrative that must contain space for the biological and adoptive or foster family. This space will sometimes be physical and tangible. At other times, it will be a mental place, which is no less critical.

**Respecting a child's diversity and privacy, and representing these differences in all classroom activities, will be fundamental for their development.**

Diverse families make up today's societies, which is reflected in every school's classrooms. When planning tasks to be carried out both inside and outside school, as well as adapting them to students' cognitive level, it is crucial to consider other factors, such as respect for diversity and inclusion. When reviewing school textbooks, the bibliography used in classrooms, school posters, murals, etc., it is still common to find examples of stereotyped images or inappropriate texts. These illustrations and words do not represent existing realities and can sometimes hurt children's sensibilities. Nowadays, it is easy to find children's literature perfectly adapted to all existing realities, where all pupils and their families feel represented, and empathy and respect are encouraged.



The same is true for some classic classroom tasks related to family, origins, or genetics that have been used repeatedly in schools. Clearly, these topics will continue to form part of the curriculum. Still, they can be sensitively put into practice, taking into account each child's family circumstances, life stories, or current situation.

Here are some examples of classic activities and how schools could rethink them to work inclusively:

- **Baby Photos**

Some children may not have a picture of themselves as babies. If we want an activity to teach someone about their physical changes and evolution, ask instead for a photo of when they were younger. This allows students to choose the moment of their life that they most want to recollect. Another option could be to make a photographic report in the classroom throughout the term or school year so that the whole group can share similar images.

- **Birth Data**

The same applies to birth data; if we want to work on life history, choose a specific period. Alternatively, work on "timelines" of historical figures. There's no need to focus on the pupils' data, which in many cases may be nonexistent or inaccurate or may emphasise sensitive moments in a child's life.

- **Father's or Mother's Day**

First of all, we must bear in mind that the idea of the traditional family is not the only one that exists. Family diversity in society is a reality that is reflected in the classroom. If we want to work with an inclusive approach, we can celebrate "Family Day", with which all children can identify.

Family Trees Family trees can be enriching projects for exploring different family models. Given that families are not based solely on biological ties, the difficulty with a family tree is their inflexibility, pigeonholing people and closing down the diversity we are discussing.

However, it is vital to talk about diversity and make students understand that they are essentially the same; that families are made up of people who love and care for each other and have feelings of belonging to a group and its system of values.

The option is to replace the family tree with another model, such as a forest of diverse trees, a family galaxy, or other more inclusive representations.

- **Genetics Activities**

When we talk about genetics, students who do not share genes with their families could feel uncomfortable revealing private information. They may not feel like sharing or fear becoming the subject of challenging questions from their peers. To avoid personalisation, create fictitious pairs for this task and make hypotheses about their descendants or use famous people known to the students.

- **Biographies**

It is relatively common in primary school to write these type of texts, usually as personal biographies. Before starting a project like this, talk to a child's family to find out if they are ready to work on their personal history.

A second option is to research a person, perhaps famous, who is of interest to the child, taking the focus away from their personal life.

## Recommendations for families and teachers

Creating safe spaces in which students can feel confident involves considering curricular elements and everything else that affects the school environment. Some areas to consider are:

- **Approach homework with an inclusive approach**

Before setting a classroom task, ensure it is equally valid for all students. Avoid using stereotypes, discriminatory elements, or themes that could hurt anyone's sensibilities.

- **Take into account the information and resources provided by the family**

Good family-school coordination and communication help when planning classroom tasks. Knowing sensitive issues that may be affecting the child is essential to address them in the most appropriate way possible.

- **Review materials used in the classroom**

Regularly review the materials used in the classroom, like textbooks, bibliography, and posters. Ensure that all of them promote respect for diversity and are inclusive, so all students can feel represented. At the same time, update those considered necessary.

- **Shifting the focus of attention**

Substituting pupils for famous, historical or fictional characters when performing certain research or fact-finding tasks helps make children feel unobserved. They won't be under pressure to provide information that they may not feel comfortable sharing at the time or with the group.