

HELPING...

young people to discover and respect difference

ACTIVITY

The Family Mural

WHY?

This activity is intended to show the diversity of the different types of families represented in *Ulysse et Alice*.

WHO?

This activity is designed for children from 4 to 8 years of age. Depending on their age, it could be more or less complex and the pedagogical objectives may vary. It can be tied in with the competencies of the Québec Education Program of the Ministry of Education of Québec (see below).

WHERE?

In the preschool, kindergarten, elementary 1 or 2 (Cycle 1) classroom or in a school or community library.

WHAT?

Depending on your group's needs and circumstances.

- 1 Information:** to respond to questions from one or more children, to encourage the integration of a child living in a homoparental or other non-traditional family.
- 2 Awareness:** to make the children aware of diversity in the composition of families, including homoparental families, and to respect those differences.
- 3 Intervention:** to react to unacceptable attitudes regarding a child who lives in a homoparental or other non-traditional family, to counteract misconceptions and hurtful language with regard to homosexuals or homoparental families.

WHEN?

We suggest broaching the subject of homoparental families in an integrated manner. In the book *Ulysse et Alice*, the homoparental family is a family like any other (pages 14 and 15). Reading the book (or others like it) and creating the *Family Mural* can be easily integrated into the context of Family Week, Valentine's Day or any other celebration of family, love, diversity or, simply, human relations within the school.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD*

Stage 1: Observation of the reality

At this stage, the children are asked to observe what is happening around them. This is the **beginning of awareness**. Children—even very young children—describe differences using rather coarse generalizations. It is also necessary to pay close attention to the children's comments and discussions in order to reduce the effects of false ideas and not reinforce them.

In *Ulysse et Alice*, apart from the family with same-sex parents, there are several situations that underscore differences in a symbolic manner. For example, the cat Capsule grew up among cows; the mouse Alice and the cat Capsule get along together even though cats and mice are not traditional allies; Alice does not have a high squeaky voice like most mice, but is, instead, a baritone. At the same time, the story stresses the similarities with all other families: they entertain a guest for dinner, they solve problems through discussion, they do their shopping and housekeeping, they play together, etc.

Stage 2: Analysis of the reality

Analysis involves identifying a phenomenon (in this case, the family with same-sex parents) and breaking it up into its essential elements to better understand and explain it. Analyzing is being able to distinguish what belongs to prejudice and what belongs to reality. To do this, the adult must place the child in a **state of awareness** and curiosity.

The proposed activities lead to questioning that can be adapted according to the age of the children. For this period, it is better to discuss one question at a time in a setting conducive to learning and respect. If inappropriate comments are made, adults should intervene and restructure the information to avoid encouraging false and preconceived ideas.

Stage 3: Transformation of the reality

To transform the reality, it is first necessary to **reflect on our ideas and our behaviour**. Children are encouraged to use appropriate behaviour and language towards children living in different family types, including families with same-sex parents. The artistic project created by the children themselves is intended to reinforce and solidify the notion of respect for others, whether or not they are like us.

In the book *Ulysse et Alice*, intentionally, none of the characters are the victims of homophobic attitudes. However, depending on the age and characteristics of the children, the learning activity can generate a commitment to appropriate attitudes and language, that each child agrees to respect.

OBSERVATION OF THE REALITY

- 1 The adult reads *Ulysse et Alice* (or a similar English book) to the children or, if they are able, they read it themselves.
- 2 The adult introduces or concludes the reading by commenting, especially, on the diversity of family situations experienced by the children.
- 3 The adult refers to pages 14 and 15 of the book *Ulysses et Alice* (see following illustrations). He/she asks the children to identify the different types of families that are represented. Then he/she asks the children to name other types of families, expanding on their suggestions.

ANALYSIS OF THE REALITY

- 1 The adult leads a discussion with the children. He /she encourages them to share their impressions and to note the diversity of types of families. The adult stresses that all types of families are equally valuable.
- 2 The discussion can be guided by certain specific questions, depending on the age of the children: What did you get out of this story? What is a family? What is the most important thing in a family for a child? What is it that brings the members of a family together?
- 3 The adult answers the children's questions in a manner appropriate to their age.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE REALITY

For children, acting and learning are inseparable. To solidify the concept of respect for different types of family, this collective artistic creation can take more or less sophisticated forms, depending on the age of the children.

NOTES

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Activity

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MATERIALS

- Old magazines with photographs of men, women, and children of various ethnic backgrounds. Also, photographs of domestic animals.
- Per duo: a sheet of coloured paper, scissors and a glue-stick.
- A large sheet of paper to create a mural.
- The five different family illustrations (included in this DVD-ROM).

PROCEDURE

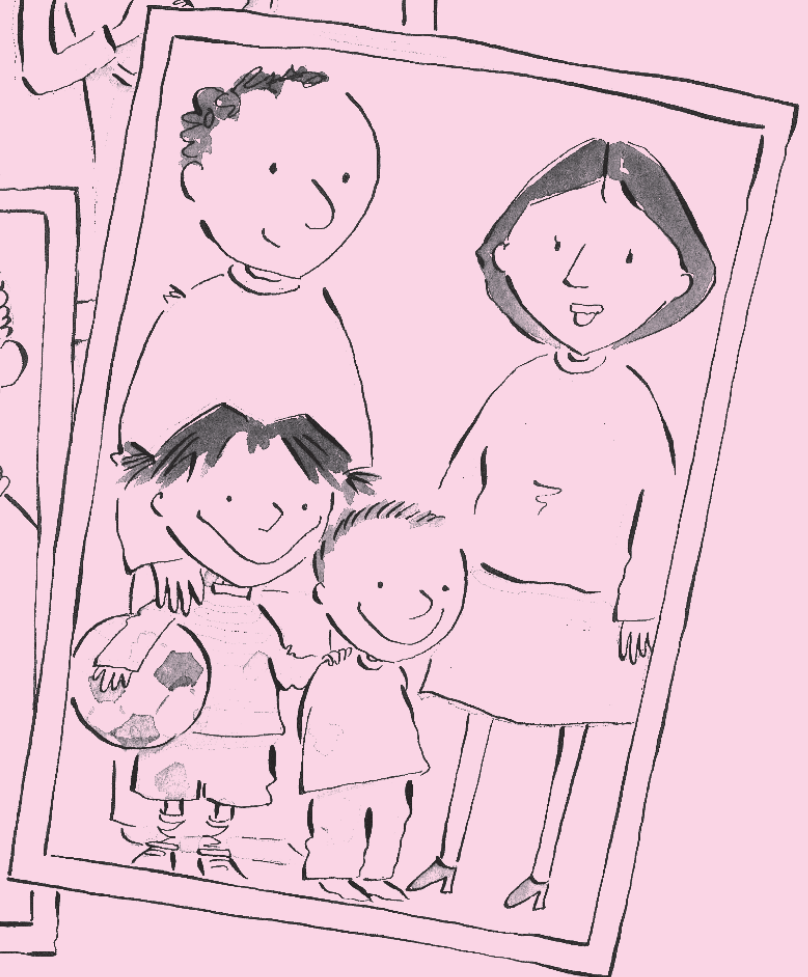
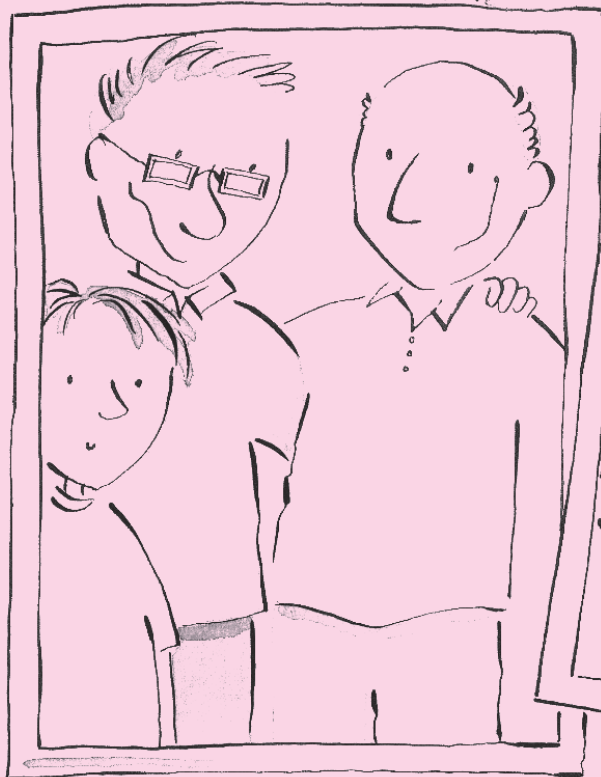
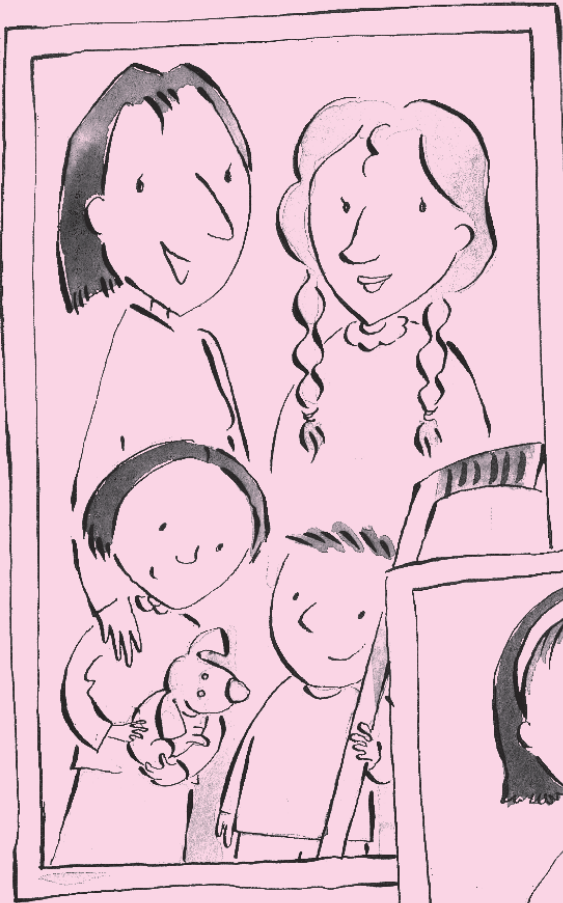
- 1 There are five different family illustrations included in this DVD-ROM that are also found on pages 14 and 15 of *Ulysse et Alice*. You can refer to these pictures before the children create their collage to show that there are all different kinds of families.
- 2 The adult assigns the children, in teams of two, to represent a type of family on a sheet of coloured paper.
- 3 The children browse through the magazines to find characters to represent "their" family, cut them out, and paste them on their sheet of paper.
- 4 Each team is invited to present "its" family to the group and paste it onto the large mural on which the adult has written, "There are many kinds of families where people love each other and feel good together."

The mural created by the children can be left on the wall for several months.

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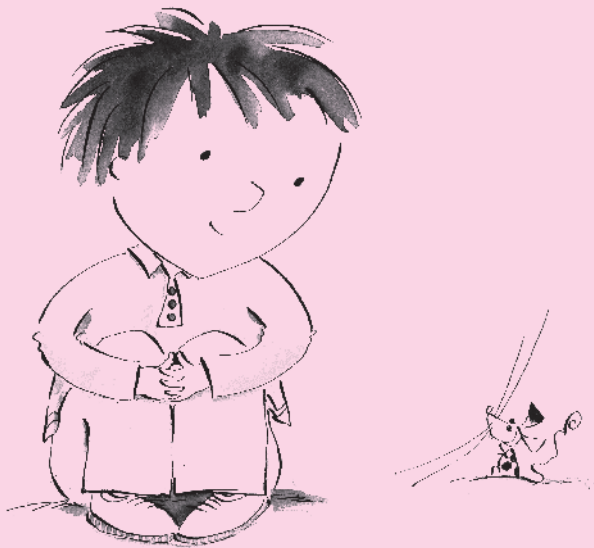
CONCLUSION

The adult stresses that love is the most important thing that binds a family together. He/she points out how important it is to respect all families and to treat them equally.



Links with the Québec Education Program

By adapting the activity to the age of the children, it is possible to tie it in with the Québec Education Program (www.mels.gouv.qc.ca).



AT THE PRESCHOOL LEVEL

Reading of the book *Ulysse et Alice* and the related learning activity fulfil a basic mandate of preschool education: encouraging the total development of the child.

The six competencies of the preschool program are incorporated in these activities:

- 1 to perform sensory-motor actions
(*fine motor skills*)
- 2 to affirm his/her personality
(*questions/answers*)
- 3 to interact harmoniously with others
(*working in groups*)
- 4 to communicate
(*presentation, hurtful language/appropriate language*)
- 5 to construct his/her understanding of the world
(*differences/family diversity*)
- 6 to complete an activity or project
(*creation of an art work in teams*)

AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL (CYCLE 1)

Reading the book, the question period and the learning activity can be integrated into the subject being taught: English, citizenship education, arts, moral education. Also, a number of the cross-curricular competencies are touched on by these activities.

• Intellectual competencies

The children learn to exercise their own critical judgement (*competency 3*) in order to recognise their own preconceived ideas and to use creative thinking (*competency 4*) to be receptive to new ideas.

• Methodological competencies

The creation of an artwork in teams requires the child to adopt effective work methods (*competency 5*) to achieve the assigned task.

• Personal and social competencies

Constructing his/her identity (*competency 7*) involves, in particular, helping the child to accept differences and to be open to diversity. These activities are perfectly suited to that objective.

The activity also requires the child to cooperate (*competency 8*) in a team structure and to communicate ideas and questions. Affirmation of the self while respecting others, constructive openness to pluralism and non-violence — all in all, what is being acquired here is how to live harmoniously with others and be open to the world.

• Communication-related competencies

This learning activity requires the student to prepare and transmit a message to the entire group through an artistic creation. The discussion, listening and formulation of questions here will lead the child to a greater mastery of socially appropriate communication (*competency 9*). The theme of hurtful language helps to anchor the concept in the daily reality of the child.