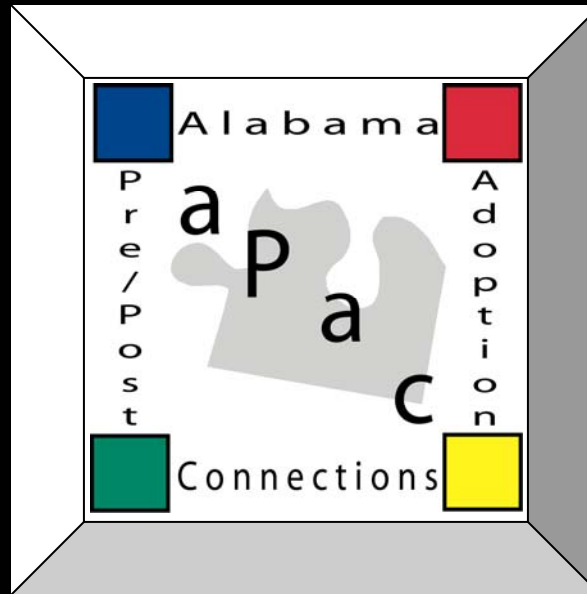
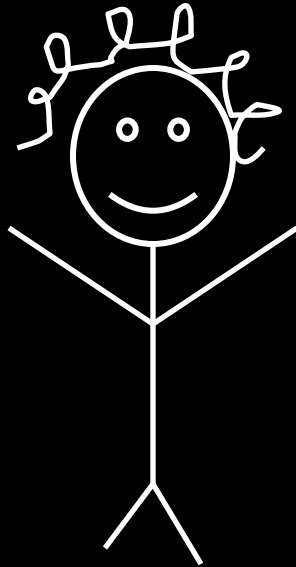


# Foster and Adopted Children in the Schools



APAC is a collaborative effort between Children's  
Aid Society and State Department of Human  
Resources



# Overview

- Setting and Modeling Appropriate Tones and Attitudes
- Issues at Enrollment
- Problematic Assignments and Activities
- Special Education Individualized Education Plans (IEP's)
- Resources



## In the U.S.:

An estimated 1 Million children live with adoptive parents (approximately 2-4 percent of families)

Many are older children who have spent time in foster families before finding their "forever family"

Statistics indicate that educators are becoming more likely to encounter adopted and foster children in their classrooms

-ADHP

2006 US Census: 1 in 25 households with children has at least one adopted child.

# Setting Positive Tones and Modeling Appropriate Attitudes





# Set A Positive Tone

- The attitude you display has a significant effect on the child, educator & classroom's attitude and response toward the topic of foster care and adoption.



Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.

-Winston Churchill

# Use Positive Language

- Positive Adoption Language
- Share handout with your child's educator
- You may be the only source of information about adoption and/or foster care

# A Bit of Humor

## Four Adoption Terms Defined

- Natural Child: Any child who is not artificial!
- Real parent: Any parent who is not imaginary!
- Your own child: Any child who is not someone else's child!
- Adopted child: A natural child, with a real parent, who is all my own.

-Written for *Adoptive Families* magazine by Rita Laws



# Example

"Ms Lane did you know that Melissa is adopted?"



"Yes, I did. Isn't that great!"

"How come Melissa is adopted?  
Where is her real Mom?"



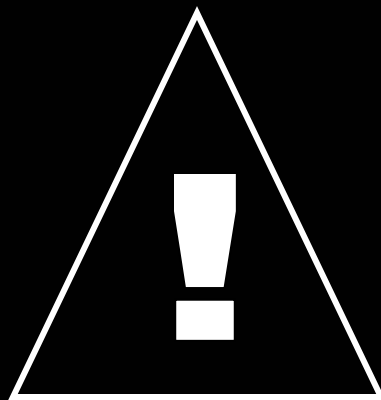
"Melissa lives with her real mother! She was here yesterday to pick her up after school. Sometimes children need families because the parents who gave birth to them could not take care of them. That's a sad time, but luckily there are people who can help them find forever families for their babies. This is called adoption."

# Issues at Enrollment



# Child's Right to Privacy and Confidentiality

- Carefully consider what information to reveal  
Share only what is necessary
- Foster parents, when in doubt, talk to your caseworker



# Confidential Information Is...

Anything about child's birth family  
The conditions of their removal from  
their birth family  
The circumstances of their personal  
history

# Questions To Review

- Will DHR accompany me to enrollment?
- Will DHR have necessary information for enrollment?
- Does child require special accommodations?
- Who is authorized to sign school documents?
- Who will be contacted in case of an emergency?
- Who has permission to pick child up from school?
- What does the school do if a child misbehaves?

# Remember...

- Starting a new school can be anxiety provoking
  - » May be dealing with being removed from birth family
  - » May be dealing with disruption from a previous placement



# Tips for Helping Your Child

- Encourage discussion of feelings and fears about changing schools
- Help plan for questions about his or her "personal situation" with a cover story
- Visit school if possible before the first day
- Discuss school code of conduct and school rules

\*\*\*Find one school personnel who will serve as your child's advocate at school.

# Assess Your Child's Situation

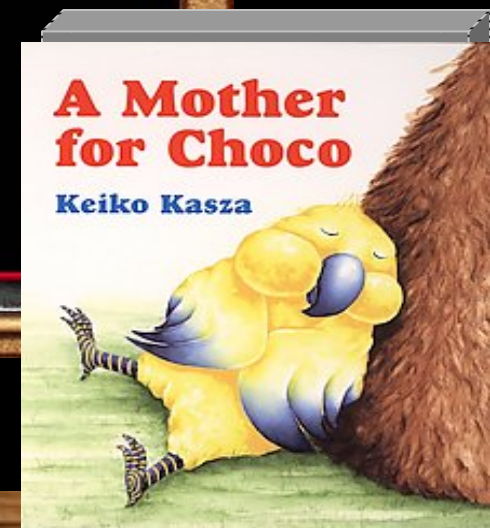
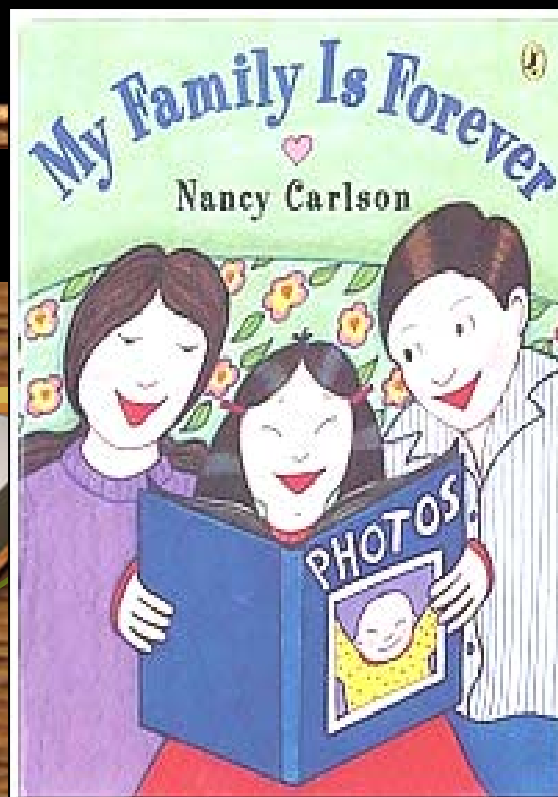
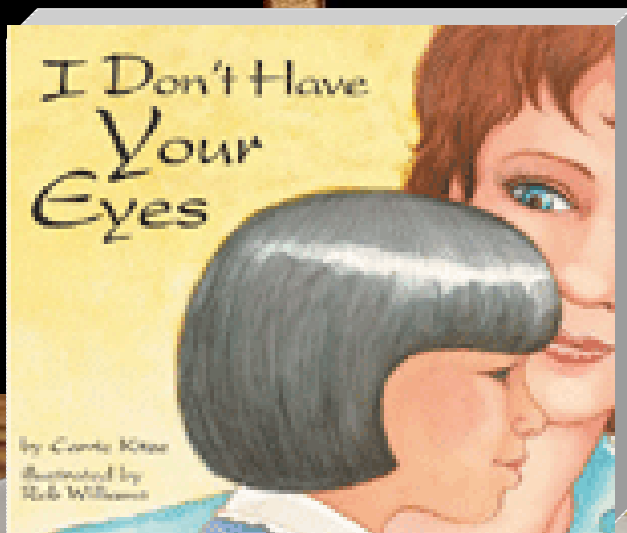
- Give the child tools they need to respond to class comments. Be prepared to respond to difficult situations
- Meet with the teacher at the beginning of the school year. Use your judgment about what is appropriate to share.
- Take a role in helping to educate teachers & administrators with general information about foster care and adoption.
- Provide teachers with positive language worksheet
- Find services that are available to the child
- Let the child know you are there for them (support)
- Work as a team with the teacher, counselor, social worker, principal

- Most studies indicate that while children ages 4- 6 may be able to tell their own adoption story they do not understand what the word "adoption" means.

Pickar (1986)

# Books Available from APAC

[www.casapac.org](http://www.casapac.org)



# 5 Ways to Create a Positive Adoption Environment in School

Though educating teachers and administrators

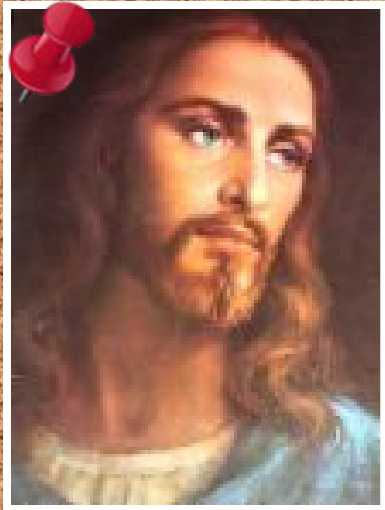
- Acceptance
- Accuracy
- Assignments
- Assistance
- Advocacy

Schoettle (2003)

- Be sensitive to the fact that children generally want to fit in and be the same as other children.
- They are unlikely to want to be singled out because they are adopted or in foster care.



# Famous Adoptee



Excellent



"The adopted child knows he belongs when the reality of his life is reflected in the culture of the classroom"

Families Adopting In Response (2001)

# SOCIAL ISSUES

- The adopted/foster child may not feel "safe" to talk about or even reveal adoption/ foster care status
- Parents may choose not to disclose adoption
- Unless the classroom is an "adoption-friendly" atmosphere, the child may experience discomfort and/or shame
- Children benefit from exposure to diversity

# EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Developed by Center for Adoption, Support & Education

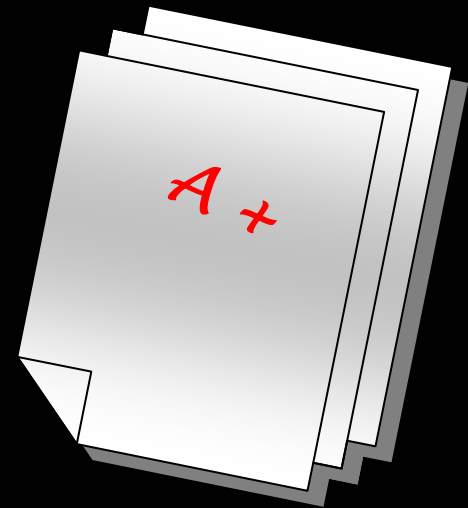
- Difference
- Reason for Adoption
- Missing Information
- Identity
- Loyalty
- Permanence

# Problematic Assignments



# Problematic Assignments

- Do not avoid assignment altogether
- Consider learning objective and seek a workable compromise
- Assist teacher in obtaining appropriate materials that include all types of families





# Problematic Assignments and Activities

- Family trees
- Personal timelines
- Baby pictures or birth data
- Autobiographies
- Genetic assignments
- Mother's Day or Father's Day activities



# Family Trees

- Consider child's age
- Be creative in making a new template
- Alternatives:  
loving tree  
caring tree  
family collage

Families Adopting in Response (2001)



# Autobiographies

- The assignment presents some potential negative problems:
  - Not telling the truth
  - Feeling ashamed of one's past
  - Revealing more than is appropriate in a classroom setting
- Alternatives: biography of historical figure in first person or a favorite experience at school

# Mother's and Father's Day Activities

- Seemingly happy occasions can call up memories of losses or trauma
- Alternative: Thank you cards for people who care for us

# Special Education and Individualized Education Programs



# Adopted Children more likely to have a learning disability

- No known causes
- Genetic Component: parents who relinquish parental rights may be more likely to have a learning disability
- Detrimental Prenatal environment
- Abusive or neglectful early relationship with birth parent
- Adoptive parents may tend to be overly observant and seek professional help

Janet Jerve- [Nacac.org/adopttalk/adoption101.pdf](http://Nacac.org/adopttalk/adoption101.pdf).



# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Every year, under the federal law known as IDEA, millions of children with disabilities receive special services designed to meet their unique needs.

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

To find out if a child is eligible for services, he or she must first receive a full and individual initial evaluation. This evaluation is free.

Two purposes of the evaluation are:

- +to see if the child has a disability, as defined by IDEA, and
- +to learn in more detail what his or her special needs are

# Disability Categories Ages 3-21

- Autism
- deaf-blindness
- emotional disturbance
- hearing impairment (including deafness)
- mental retardation
- multiple disabilities
- visual impairment (including blindness).
- orthopedic impairment
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- speech or language impairment
- traumatic brain injury, or

# Learning Disabilities

A disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written.

Most commonly diagnosed disorder in students  
between 3 and 5 percent of children have ADHD

The Institute of Mental Health (2008)

Does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

- **Accommodations:** Tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for students with disabilities. Designed to "level the playing field" for students with disabilities, accommodations are generally grouped into the following categories:
  - Presentation
  - Response
  - Timing
  - Setting

# Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

- Blueprint used to guide your child's education
- Written statement about special education and services related to your child's needs
- Describes any modifications to your child's regular education classes
- Start a "parent's notebook"



# IEP Highlights

- Written by a team of teachers, school personnel, child (if deemed appropriate), the child's legal guardian & acting parental guardian ( if applicable)
- Typically completed once a school year
- You are provided with handout explaining your rights
- At 14 your child states their potential transition goals
- Upon signing the IEP you signify your attendance and participation.

# Laws and Regulations (CONT)

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act: A civil rights statute. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Must have a physical or mental medical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life event.
- IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Federal law requiring public schools to provide special education services. Child must meet one of 13 specific recognized disabilities.

# If You Feel That a Violation Has Occurred

## REMEMBER:

**\*\*\*COMMUNICATE ISSUES/NEEDS AS YOU GO.**

- **State Complaint:** A written complaint that can be filed by any organization or individual, when a school district within the state has violated requirements regarding the delivery of S.E. services.
- **Due Process Complaint:** A written complaint filed by a parent or a school district relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement or provision of a free, appropriate, public education to a student with a disability. Due process complaints must be filed within two years of the matter in dispute.
- **Due Process Hearing:** A formal, quasi-legal procedure before an impartial hearing officer or administrative law judge (or panel of judges) who is not an employee of the state educational agency or school district. Both the parents and the school district present arguments and evidence.

# Conclusion

- Act as an advocate for your child
- The home/school team is essential to your child's success
- Know your APAC resources
- Access assistance when needed



# Other Resources

- National Center for Learning Disabilities  
[www.ncld.org](http://www.ncld.org)
- Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parents Association [www.afapa.org](http://www.afapa.org)
- The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)
- Fostering Families Today  
[www.fosteringfamielstoday.com](http://www.fosteringfamielstoday.com)

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