



Deprived Backgrounds

Pupils coming from single-parent families



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Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Be alert to behaviour changes** such as a drop in grades, inattentiveness or excessive daydreaming in class, absenteeism, sadness or anxiousness.
2. **Look for signs of stress in pupils**, including personality and behavioural changes.
3. **Make a point of integrating words like stepmother, stepfather, remarry and divorce** into classroom examples and conversations so that these terms are as common as grandmother, uncle or cousin.
4. **Create and maintain an atmosphere of openness and respect** for non-traditional families.
5. **Provide ample and safe opportunities for pupils coming from monoparental families to share feelings** about their current or former family situation without being judged negatively by others.
6. **Provide reading and research opportunities** that enable pupils to acquire information regarding divorce such as storybooks, novels and research-based literature.
7. **Set healthy boundaries** so that pupils from monoparental families do not slip into manipulative behaviour, using their parents' divorce as an excuse for irresponsibility or misbehaviour.
8. **Be consistent in your approach** to pupils from monoparental families, but also flexible at times when they may be facing added pressures at home.
9. **Ensure equal opportunities** for classroom roles and responsibilities.
10. **Teach about diversity and differences** by presenting or referring to different types of families that exist all over the world, without making references to specific individuals in the class, or their families. Emphasise that there are many different types of families: some with a few children, some with many children; some with both parents present, some with one parent present; and some with grandparents or aunts and uncles.

[Reference: <http://www.education.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Divorce.pdf>]



School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

Class Divisions / Arrangements

Include pupils of single-parent families in events and activities by differentiating their roles and contributions. For example, instead of asking all pupils to uniformly memorise a poem for Mother's Day, take advantage of individual pupils' talents in acting, theatre and role-play.

Curricular Adaptations

1. **Involve all your pupils in school projects and make sure you provide a wide range of themes.**
2. **Be conscious and sensitive when organising school events.** For example, instead of preparing gifts for "Mom" and "Dad" you might refer instead to gifts and events for a "Special Someone".
3. **Include pupils of single-parent families in events and activities by differentiating their roles and contributions.** For example, instead of asking all pupils to uniformly memorise a poem for Mother's Day, take advantage of individual pupils' talents in acting, theatre and role-play.

Discipline

Provide consistency in schedules and discipline to help provide a sense of security for pupils whose families are going through a divorce.

Food (Canteen, Visits, Camps, Trips)

Provide school canteen discounts for pupils coming from single-parent families in cases where the family also faces economic difficulties. These should be offered discreetly.

Parents / Parents Associations

Arrange meetings between parents (together or separately) and the staff to discuss pupils' progress, and to enhance the collaboration between home and school. This will help to monitor progress and to discuss also issues that might be related to pupils' social life, such as marginalisation, social interactions with peers, behaviour at home, and self-esteem.

Safety

Provide consistency in schedules and discipline to help provide a sense of security for pupils whose families are going through a divorce.

School celebrations / Events / Activities

1. **Be conscious and sensitive when organising school events.** For example, instead of preparing gifts for “Mom” and “Dad” you might refer instead to gifts and events for a “Special Someone”.
2. Include pupils of single-parent families in events and activities by differentiating their roles and contributions. **For example, instead of asking all pupils to uniformly memorise a poem for Mother’s Day, take advantage of individual pupils’ talents in acting, theatre and role-play.**

School Projects

1. **Involve all your pupils in school projects and make sure you provide a wide range of themes.**
2. **Be conscious and sensitive when organising school events.** For example, instead of preparing gifts for “Mom” and “Dad” you might refer instead to gifts and events for a “Special Someone”.

Pupil Support

1. **Offer pupils extra support if possible, including counselling support.** This can help them deal with such feelings of being unworthy of love, worthlessness, rejection, anger, conflicting loyalties, loneliness, and sadness.
2. **Arrange meetings between parents (together or separately) and the staff to discuss pupils’ progress, and to enhance the collaboration between home and school.** This will help to monitor progress and to discuss also issues that might be related to pupils’ social life, such as marginalisation, social interactions with peers, behaviour at home, and self-esteem.
3. **Provide school canteen discounts for pupils coming from single-parent families in cases where the family also faces economic difficulties.** These should be offered discreetly.

Supportive Literature

Definition: A single parent is an uncoupled individual who shoulders most or all of the day-to-day responsibilities of raising a child or children. A mother is more often the primary caregiver in a single-parent family structure that has arisen due to death of the partner, divorce or unplanned pregnancy.

Families play an important role in every society: “Generally, a family provides a child with opportunities to develop into a stable and independent person, for instance, through enabling the child to attend school. The future success of children thus greatly depends on the household they grow up in. Nevertheless, a child is not in the position to choose [her/his] own family and has to accept if its family is not capable of offering him or her the best opportunities” (Lange, Dronkers, Wolbers 2014-331).

Disadvantages of growing up in single-parent families include:

- lower educational attainment
- greater psychological distress
- poor adult outcomes in areas such as employment, income, and marital status.

[Reference: Woessmann, 2015]

Children of single-parent families face greater risks than those growing up in other types of families. Statistics suggest that children of single-parent families are three times more likely to drop out of high school than those from two-parent families. There are some obstacles hindering effective academic performance such as:

- Emotional scarring left by separation that disrupts the child’s development and performance
- Absence of the other parent may interrupt a child’s natural growth and development
- Children may be inadvertently forced to grow up as they take on the duties of the absent parent
- Limited time and income become an issue as in how much time is focused on homework or whether money is spent to enjoy cultural activities
- Educational goals and aspirations may not be set as high.

Useful websites

Family Influence on Education:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/02/25/report-marks-growing-educational-disadvantage-children-single-parent-families>

Academic Achievement of Children in Single Parent Homes: A Critical Review:

<http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=hilltopreview>

Teens From Single-Parent Families Leave School Earlier:

<http://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2015/february/teens-from-single-parent-families-leave-school-earlier.html>

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