

TAGS: Parenting; School Issues

Letter to My Child's Teacher at the Beginning of School

When the classroom assignments come out at the end of every summer, many adoptive parents have a moment or two where they wonder WHAT, if anything, they should share with this year's teacher about their children's adoption history. It's a quandary for sure. You don't want to share too much, as Johnny's story is his to tell. But you also want to tell the teacher enough that he or she won't be taken by surprise when the topic of adoption comes up. And you can be sure, whether it's in context of a class-wide assignment or kid-talk during recess, the topic of adoption WILL come up. We've created a "sample letter" for you to personalize and share with your child's teacher to help you prepare for those conversations.

Dear Teacher,

Johnny is excited about this school year and so are we. I wanted to share some information about our son that will help you get to know him.

Johnny was adopted at (age) and we have (limited information on his early life, are in an open adoption with his birth family, etc.)

You are in a powerful position to send a message about adoption to both our child as well as to other children in the class.

We would like for you to send a positive message that families are formed in different ways. Some children are born to their parents and some children are adopted by their parents. Regardless of how families come about, they are all "normal" and all are good.

I thought it might make your job easier if I shared some appropriate responses to some typical questions children may ask:

Where are Johnny's real parents?

Johnny has two sets of real parents—the parents that gave birth to him and the parents that will raise him and be his mom and dad forever. That's Mrs. and Mr. Smith, who you know.

Why didn't Johnny's birth parents keep him?

Johnny's birth parents weren't ready to raise a baby when he was born.

Why doesn't Johnny look like his mommy?

Children usually look like the parents that gave birth to them. Johnny probably looks like his birth parents.

Some school assignments may be hard for us. I'm not asking that you change the assignment, but I would like advanced warning and some room for creativity in how we can adapt the assignment to fit our circumstances. A few examples of challenging school assignments would include:

- Family tree
- Baby pictures
- Birth or young infancy stories
- Inherited traits

I would love the opportunity to meet with you after you have had a chance to get to know my wonderful boy. Can we schedule a time to talk in about three weeks? I would also love to come in and read some books about adoption to the class – we have quite a collection.

We are looking forward to working with you to make this a great year for Johnny. Thank you so much for being on our team.

Best wishes,
Johnny's Loving Parents

Other Considerations

Depending on your child and whether you think this information needs to be presented up front or if it can wait for your meeting, you may want to include the following type of information. Adapt it to fit your child, but always start with the positive.

- Johnny is enthusiastic about everything and loves school. He tries hard to please.
- Due to his early life experiences _____, he carries around a lot of stress. When more stress is added, you may see him - _____. He usually responds well when you _____.
- He sometimes struggles to remember boundaries and you may see him _____. He usually responds well when you _____.
- He has some developmental gaps that make learning hard.
- English was not his first language and that makes language arts harder for him.
- He does not have an IEP, but we have found that the following techniques work well to help him learn: (insert suggestions here)

We have found some wonderful additional resources on our partner sites, for supporting your child in the school setting, starting with [NACAC's Adoption and the Schools](#).

C.A.S.E. also offers several fact sheets aimed at equipping parents to interact with their child's educational professionals, including [Adoption at School](#). If your child has additional educational needs, you might find [Supporting Adopted Children with Special Needs in the School Setting](#) to be helpful.