

# NYC School 'Inclusive Language' Guide Encourages Students to Stop Saying 'Mom,' 'Dad'



A private K-12 school in Manhattan is encouraging its students to stop using the terms "mom," "dad" and "[parents](#)," in an effort to make the campus a more "welcoming and inclusive" space.

In a 12-page "inclusive [language](#)" guide ([pdf](#)), the Grace Church School recommends that students, staff, and parents "remove harmful assumptions" from the way they interact. For example, "grown-ups," "folks," "family" or "guardians" are considered better alternatives to "mom," "dad" and "parents," because they allege the latter contain assumptions about what a "typical" family looks like.

"Families are formed and structured in many ways," the language guide states. "At Grace Church School, we use inclusive language that reflects

this diversity. It's important to refrain from making assumptions about who kids live with, who cares for them, whether they sleep in the same place every night, whether they see their parents, etc."

It added that "traditional family" is an outdated term. "We actively try to undo notions of a 'typical' or 'normal' family structure," the school says. "Each family is unique."

When it comes to gender, the language guide recommends teachers not address their students as "boys and girls," "guys," "ladies and gentlemen," but gender-neutral "people," "folks," "friends," "readers," or even "mathematicians." Adults are encouraged to "take gender out of text where it's unnecessary" when reading books to children. For example, they can say "child," "person," or "character," instead of "the boy/girl on this page."

The Episcopal school also asks staff and students to avoid making assumptions about people in conversation that "touches on religion." Wishing someone "Happy holiday" is deemed not religiously neutral enough, according to the guide, and is better replaced by "Have a great break."

The guide, which was first reported by former New York Times columnist [Bari Weiss](#) in [her article](#) about "miseducation" in some of America's most elite schools, drew media coverage and criticism.

"We come into this world male/female. It's good to have Mom/Dad/Gma/Gpa/Aunt/Uncle," Liz Joy, a New York Republican running to represent the state's 20th congressional district, [wrote on Twitter](#). "This school is further destroying [the] nuclear family."

The school defended the guide, saying that it didn't actually ban any word and was meant to "promote politeness, dignity and respect."

"We have taught our students to use language thoughtfully from day one," George P. Davison, the head of the school, wrote [in a statement](#) to the campus community. "It is why our vacations are denominated by the seasons and not the Christian holidays that fall within them. Not every student at Grace has two living parents; that is one reason why we encourage teachers to use language that does not presume that all of their students do."

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