

Being the Change You Want to See in The World

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

Students will be able to:

PS.8.SM.1 – Describe ways to treat others with dignity and respect.

PS.8.ADV.1 – Advocate for safe environments that encourage dignified and respectful treatment of everyone.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 9

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- Two signs: “Yes” and “No” (either written on paper and posted on the wall or written on the white board)
- Index cards (one per student)
- Sheets of blank paper (one per group of 3-4 students)
- “Student Support” bookmarks and cards (one per student)
- “California Minor Consent Laws Cards” (one per student)

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- There should be as much space in the classroom as possible for the students to move around.
- The “Yes” and “No” signs should be posted on the wall or written on the white board with sufficient space between the two signs for students to be able to move around and for a small group to be able to stand beneath each sign.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe their own experiences of being disrespected and the impact these experiences had on them. [Knowledge, Affect]
2. List at least two examples of ways in which people are treated respectfully or disrespectfully because of their gender and/or sexual orientation. [Knowledge]
3. Describe at least one situation in which a young person was discriminated against because of their gender or sexual orientation, and the steps they took to advocate for change that would end that discrimination. [Knowledge]

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we’ve intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar—using the pronoun “they” instead of “her” or “him,” using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to “someone with a vulva” vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom and should make adjustments accordingly.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Tell students that you are going to be talking about respect in class today—particularly as it pertains to respecting people whose gender or sexual orientation may be different from yours. Remind the students about the differences between gender and sexual orientation. Refer students to the ground rules or group agreements, especially around respecting each others’ opinions, since you are going to be doing an activity in which they will be sharing theirs.

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Ask the class to stand up. Show them the “Yes” and “No” signs. Tell them that you are going to be reading a number of statements, and if one applies to them they should go stand under the “Yes” sign. But if any do not, they should stand under the “No” sign. Give them an unrelated example to practice, such as: “I have a dog” and ask them to stand under the appropriate sign.

Say, **“I am going to read some statements that are going to ask you to share whether you’ve heard or experienced certain things—or even used language—that you may have known was wrong, but did it anyway. You may feel tempted to not be honest because of that. I’m going to ask you to be as honest as you feel you can be.”**

Read each of the following statements, reminding them to stand under “Yes” if it applies to them and “No” if it does not. Once the students have moved, ask one or two students under each sign to give an example.

Note to the Teacher: *It is helpful to read each statement more than once to allow students to let what you have said sink in so they can think before responding.*

1. I often hear phrases like “that’s so gay,” or the word “gay” used in a negative way at school.
2. I often hear terms like “faggot” and “dyke” used by my friends.
3. When people say “that’s so gay” or “no homo,” I don’t think they mean it as an insult against actual gay or lesbian people.
4. I have heard people use the word “girl” (e.g., “you run like a girl”) as an insult.
5. I have personally had expressions like “that’s so gay” or “dyke” said to or at me or to my close friends.
6. I have heard students say negative things about transgender people.
7. Expressions like “that’s so gay” and “dyke” are never okay to use.
8. It would be impossible to get kids at my school to reduce or stop using terms like “that’s so gay” and “no homo.”

Once you’ve gone through all the statements, ask the students to return to their seats. Process the activity by asking the following questions:

- **What was it like to do that?**
- **What did you notice about people’s responses?**
- **Did anything surprise you about where people stood?**
- **Did any of the statements make anyone feel uncomfortable? Why?** (22 minutes)

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STEP 2: Distribute one index card to each student. Ask them to think about a time when they felt like they were not treated respectfully. Have any of them been treated poorly because of their race or ethnicity? Their religion? Their gender? The amount of money their family has as compared to what others have? Ask them to think about what was said or done, how it made them feel, and what, if anything, they did about it.

Ask, “**What is a word you would use to describe how you felt when you were disrespected?**” Ask them to write that one word down on their index card. As they are writing, write “When I am disrespected, I feel...” on the white board. As they complete the index cards, gather them up, shuffle them, and redistribute them to the class. Go around the room and ask each student to complete the phrase on the board with whatever word is written on their card. As students provide words, write them up on the board. If they don’t share them, or if only one or two students speak, feel free to add a few, saying, “**I have heard people who have felt disrespected say they feel...**”:

- Sad
- Inferior
- Invisible
- Worthless
- Stupid
- Powerless
- Angry
- Resentful

Reflect with them on what they heard and on what was repeated or left out. (5 minutes)

STEP 3: Say, “**No matter what your experience, clearly, being disrespected is not a good thing. The good news, though, is that if there are ways we can make people feel disrespected, then there are ways to treat people that do not hurt and that do show respect. We’re going to take some time now to figure out what those are.**”

Ask the students to brainstorm together what they think the school does well around students feeling safe and respected when it comes to gender and sexual orientation. What examples of respect do they see in classrooms, offices, hallways, etc.? Responses may include the following:

- Posters with messages of respect posted in classrooms, offices, hallways, etc.
- Teachers responses when a student is being disrespected
- Consequences for not treating people with respect (e.g., detention)
- Students sticking up for other people
- Assemblies or guest speakers who have come in to talk about respect for others

As students respond, write their ideas on the board. If they don’t come up with any of these, ask the students how they feel about each of the examples above. For example, “Has anyone ever seen a poster that says something about respect? Where?”

Once the list is written (it’s okay if there is only one thing listed), say, “**All schools can do better around respect. We talked earlier about what it feels like for LGBTQ students to hear such strong language of disrespect. What are some things you would want to change here that would make students of all genders and sexual orientations feel safe and respected?**”

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Record responses on the board, then ask them to get into groups of 3-4 students. Ask them to write the names in their group on the top of a sheet of blank paper. Then ask them to write down one of the ideas generated on the board that they'd like to see change or improve around students being treated/treating others with respect at their school. Ask them to talk in their group about specific action steps that could be taken to make that change. Be sure they write down who would be involved. For example, would the Principal have to make a new school rule around language? Would the Student Council need to do something? As they work, go around the room and check in to make sure they understand the assignment and are on the right track.

After about 8 minutes, have groups read aloud to the class what they would like to change and an idea they have for making that change. Ask whether other groups identified that same idea, and have them go next with ideas for making that change that the previous group(s) may not have mentioned. (15 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, **"It's not always easy to make change, but it is possible. You all just came up with some simple steps that can be taken at school to make this the best school environment possible. In the 9th grade, you may not always be able to change how the school works—but your teacher can take your ideas and pass them along to the Principal or talk about them at their next All-Staff Meeting. In the meantime, you do have the power to look at the language you use, how you behave with others, and how others act. Whether you intervene in those situations is up to you to decide."** (2 minutes)

STEP 5: Explain that you are going to distribute two cards to the students: a *Student Support* bookmark or card and a *California Minor Consent Laws* card. As you distribute the cards, explain the information on them by saying, **"The Student Support bookmark or card has a website address on it (www.sandiegounified.org/Support). This website contains many reliable and medically accurate websites for youth. The websites range from information on local sexual health clinics and services, to sexuality and relationship information, to alcohol and drug services, to LGBTQ supports. Please explore this website further on your own and refer to these resources whenever they need them."**

Referring to the *California Minor Consent Laws* card, say, **"In California, any student of any age may legally and confidentially obtain birth control, including condoms, without notifying or getting permissions from parents or guardians if they do not wish to. Anyone of any age may also consent to their own pregnancy care, including pregnancy testing, prenatal care, and abortion. Minors 12 years and older may also consent to their own STI and HIV testing and treatment without notifying parents if they do not wish to. This includes being able to consent to their own HPV vaccine as well as accessing PrEP medication for HIV prevention. In fact, one confidential source for free condoms is your School Nurse."**

In addition, students in California may also leave school during school hours to attend a sexual health care appointment for any of these reasons. If a student wishes to pursue this option, please talk with the school nurse or counselor to arrange this appointment."

Remind students to talk with a parent, caregiver, or trusted adult if possible if they need any of these services; however, if they need to seek care without telling their parent/guardian they are legally able to do so. Also let students know about any optional brochures available for them to take. (6 minutes)

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RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The placement of students and explanations for why they stood where they did during the forced choice activity will enable teachers to determine whether Learning Objective 2 was achieved. The discussion that follows and brainstorm of the feelings that being disrespected engenders will enable teachers to determine whether the Learning Objectives 1 and 2 are met.

Note: The Where Do I Stand? Activity was adapted from the GLSEN Guide to Think B4 You Speak.