

Wanted: Qualified Parent

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:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

PR.12.DM.2 – Assess the skills and resources needed to become a parent.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 11
Lesson 4

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: “Adoptive Parent Applicants” – one per student
- Handout: “Resources for Young Families” (for the teacher to develop) – one per student
- Extra sheets of scrap paper, in case students didn't bring their notebooks
- White board and dry erase markers
- Extra pencils in case students don't have their own

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Research and create a brief handout for the class to take away listing local resources for young families. This could include services in your own school, local non-profits, or through your local department of health or social/human services. A number of states have state-wide teen pregnancy/young family support organizations that can connect you to more local resources. To see if there is one close to you, go to <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/state-organization-contacts>.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe at least three characteristics of a good parent. [Knowledge]
2. Name at least one local resource a young parent can go to for resources and support. [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: Ask students whether any of them have ever seen a “want” ad for a job, either in a newspaper or online. Ask, “Has anyone ever seen a “want” ad for a parent?” Most students will laugh or simply say no.

Divide the class into small groups of three. Make sure each group has a piece of paper and something to write with. If they do not, provide from the scrap paper and extra pencils you brought. Ask students to decide who is going to be the writer in the group.

Say, “So, today we are going to create a “want” ad for a parent. Usually, want ads list the qualities the company needs for the position they're advertising for. We're going to do the same with a parent.”

Instruct students to talk about and write down a list of the characteristics they think makes someone a good parent. Tell them that they will have five minutes in which to brainstorm their list. (7 minutes)

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STEP 2: After about five minutes, ask everyone to stop. Ask groups one at a time to share one of the characteristics on their sheets and record their responses on the whiteboard. Instruct other groups to cross off the characteristics from their sheets if another group shares it to avoid repetition.

Although the brainstorm list you will have will be different each time, sample responses tend to include:

- Loving
- Caring
- Patient
- Fun
- Has a home/place to live
- Has a good job
- Has money

When the list has been completed, do not comment on it at this point, except to thank everyone for their participation; do not add any characteristics yourself. (12 minutes)

STEP 3: Ask students to remain in their small groups. Say, "I'm going to ask you all to pretend you work at an adoption agency. You have a new baby, and your job is to place this baby for adoption. You have several applicants who are interested in adopting the baby." Distribute the Adoptive Parent Applicant sheets. Ask for individual students to volunteer to read aloud each of the applicant profiles.

Then tell them that, although they should remain in their groups, they will now have about five minutes in which to review the applicants again, and decide for themselves who they think would make the ideal parents and why. Who do they think is the most qualified? Who would be their two backup options if their #1 candidate(s) fall through? And so on.

After about five minutes, ask everyone to stop. Then ask them to discuss their thinking in their small groups and why they felt that way. Tell them their goal is to reach agreement on the priority order of their top three candidates. Tell them they will have another five minutes in which to discuss and try to reach consensus. As the small groups are discussing, write the names of the applicants up on the board. (8 minutes)

STEP 4: After about five minutes, stop the small group discussions. Ask the small groups to share who their number one candidates were and who their number two candidates were. Record these on the board next to the candidate names.

Ask, "What was it like to do that? What was [insert students' responses] about it?"

Ask students what they notice about the rankings on the board (there may be a lot of agreement, a lot of disagreement, or a mix of both). Ask, "How did you decide on your number one applicant? What made you determine that they were the most qualified? How did you decide who the next two backups would be?"

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Facilitate a discussion with students, which generates some agreement and some disagreement.

***Note to the Teacher:** You are listening for reasons and feedback that are both consistent with, and different from, what they listed on the board as important characteristics for parents. This speaks to the visceral nature behind what people often feel makes someone a good or a bad parent.*

As you discuss the applicants, point out any biases you notice relating to gender (for example, a man who applies) or sexual orientation. In addition, students will often say that teen candidates are not prepared solely because they are teens. If students have not mentioned age on the board as an important characteristic for a parent, point that out. If they did mention age, ask, "What if someone were a teenager, but had all the other characteristics on your list? Could they still be a strong parent?"

Ask, "So, say a teen does become a parent. What can they and their partner do in order to stay in school and also be the best parent they can be? All parents need help. Where to you think young parents can get this help? To whom should they turn?"

Responses may include: from their own parents or other adult caregivers, from other family members, from friends who are young parents, from faith communities, from community-based organizations, and so on.

Say, "No matter how old you are, if you choose to become a parent, it is a HUGE responsibility and a ton of work. It can be a wonderfully rewarding experience – but, people of all ages do better when they have some support in their lives. If there are people your age who are pregnant or who have become parents, they may want to know about these resources." (20 minutes)

STEP 5: Distribute the handout listing local resources for young parents. Ask students whether they have heard of any of them, and if so, what they have heard. Invite students to take these handouts with them and share them with friends as they see fit. (3 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The entire class session will achieve the first learning objective. If teachers create and distribute a brief local resource sheet, they will achieve the second objective.

HOMEWORK:

None.

Adoptive Parent Applicants

1. Will is 33 years old and owns a very successful local bar in town. He lives alone in a one-bedroom apartment he has owned for a few years. He works most nights from 5pm – 1am, and every other weekend. He goes to school part-time to become a chef and dreams of opening a restaurant. Will loves kids and has been a Big Brother through a local volunteer agency several times.

2. Amy is 23. She got married very early and it didn't work out, so after a year together they divorced. She works at the front desk of a health club in town and spends most of her non-work time exercising. She lives alone in a small, one-room apartment and although she dates, she is very lonely. She says that every time she walks by someone with a child on the street, she can't wait to have a daughter of her own; to do things together, share clothes, and talk. She and her mom are best friends and do a lot together, and she really wants to do that for someone else. Her mom is on board and already said she'll help out.

3. Sasha and Ben are seniors who met in middle school. They have been together ever since, and are in love. Sasha works part time at the mall and Ben has received a full scholarship to go to a local state college next year. They love to babysit Ben's baby brother who is two. They also like hanging out with friends and going to the movies. There's nothing they want more than to become parents together and they want to do it now while they have a lot of energy. They are very close with their families and think both their parents and their grandparents would help out with the baby.

4. Chris is 47 and Kiara is 39. They have both been working as lawyers since they graduated from Ivy League colleges and law schools. They both specialize in international law and are out of the country at least once a month. They have two children already and an excellent nanny who takes care of the children, brings them to school, tutors the children in their schoolwork, and even attends their back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences. Chris and Kiara think parenting is a breeze and would love to have a third child. They're just rarely in the same place at the same time, Kiara would not want to be pregnant again, and so they think adopting would be better.

5. Jaymie and V. are in their early 30s. Jaymie is a college professor and V. is an investment banker. They have lived in their community for about a year and are very involved in LGBTQ issues and rights such as equal housing and having a commemoration of pride in June. They live in a small house in the suburbs, right near the college where Jaymie teaches, and it is an easy commute to the city for V. They are both socially minded in general – Jaymie was arrested several times in their former city during various protests and demonstrations – and want to pass that desire for social justice on to a child. They love to travel and look forward to traveling as a family someday.

6. DeShawn and Rachelle are both in their mid-20s. Rachelle is a bus driver and DeShawn is an accountant. Together they earn a good income. Rachelle went through an anger management class a number of years ago and has been doing really great ever since. They are newly married but have been together since high school. They found out that they both have issues with fertility and are unable to have a child biologically so they are very eager to adopt.