

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:

By the end of 8th grade, 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 7
Lesson 10

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers
- Two signs, one that reads “Yes” and one that reads “No” (**Note to the Teacher:** *If you remain in the classroom and your white board is wide enough, you can also simply write “Yes” and “No” on each end of the board instead of using signs*)
- Index cards - one per student
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students do not have their own
- Homework: “Advocating for Change” – one per student

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- You will need to have space in your classroom for the students to move around. If you do not have that space, see if you can arrange to be in an unoccupied classroom or the gymnasium or other larger space as available.
- Before the “Where Do You Stand?” activity, be sure to post the “Yes” and “No” signs on the wall with sufficient space between the two for students to be able to move around and a small group to be able to stand beneath each.

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 the 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 classroom contract, 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. (If you need to leave the classroom, ask them to follow you into the open space you'll be in for the next activity.) Show them the signs "Yes" and "No." Tell them that you are going to be reading a number of statements, and if each 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: "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 take their seats or return to your classroom if you have left the room. Process the activity by asking the following questions:

- What was it like to do that?
- What did you notice about people's responses?

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- Did anything surprise you about where people stood?
- Did any of the statements make anyone feel uncomfortable? Why? (22 minutes)

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 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, 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 don’t 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 do they see in classrooms, offices, hallways, etc.? Responses may include the following:

- Classroom, cafeteria or office posters talking about respect
- The way the teachers respond when they or a student is being disrespected
- The consequences for not treating people with respect (e.g., detention)

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- Hearing students stick 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. For example, "Has anyone ever seen a poster that says something about respect? Where?"

Once the list is up (it is 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 see change here that would make students of all genders and sexual orientations feel safe and respected?"

Record responses on the board, then ask students to get into groups of 3. Ask them to write their names on the top of a sheet of 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. Ask them to talk in a 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 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. (18 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 seventh grade, you may not always be able to change how the school works – but we can take your ideas and pass them along to the principal, which I plan to do. 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: Introduce the homework assignment. Explain that they will be given the choice of several brief videos to watch about students who were not treated with respect for issues relating to their gender or sexual orientation. Ask them to watch one of the videos and write brief responses to the questions provided. Distribute the homework response sheets with the links to the videos and probing questions. (3 minutes)

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 the second learning objective was achieved. The discussion that follows and brainstorm of the feelings that being disrespected engenders will enable teachers to determine whether the first and second learning objectives are met. The homework assignment is designed to meet the third learning objective.

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HOMEWORK:

“Advocating for Change” – a worksheet that provides three options of videos depicting young people working to make change in their schools or communities on an issue relating to gender or sexual orientation. Students need to watch one of the three video clips provided and respond to the questions that follow that link.

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

Homework: Advocating for Change

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Please choose ONE of the following video clips, which shows a young person speaking out about treating people with respect at school. Based on what you see in the video clip, please answer the questions that follow.

OPTION ONE:

16-year-old Malala Yousafzai, who was shot by the Taliban in her home country of Pakistan, addresses the United Nations.

<http://www.biography.com/people/malala-yousafzai-21362253#after-the-attack>

Questions:

Malala was shot by the Taliban because she had very strong beliefs. What were those beliefs?

What does she feel is key to promoting equal rights for girls and women around the world?

Why does she continue to fight for girls and women, when she knows it is dangerous for her to do so?

OPTION TWO:

14-year-old Hannah Faughnan sues her school district because they do not want a gay-straight alliance at her middle school.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/05/gay-straight-alliance-school-hannah-faughnan-carver-high-school_n_6806096.html

Questions:

Why is the school board resisting the creation of the gay-straight alliance?

What did Hannah decide to do about it?

Is she working alone, or with others to try to make this happen? Why do you think she is doing it that way?

OPTION THREE:

15-year-old Gavin Grimm is transgender – assigned a girl at birth, but identifies as male. He has been fighting to be able to use the boys' restroom at school.

<http://wtkr.com/2015/07/27/judge-dismisses-part-of-transgender-teens-lawsuit-has-not-ruled-yet-on-motion-for-injunction/>

Questions:

Why do you think Gavin feels so strongly about being able to use the boys' restroom?

What steps has he taken to make a change at his school?

What do you think should happen? Based on your thoughts, what should Gavin do in response? The school?