

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 5th grade, students will be able to:

IV.8.ADV.1 – Develop a plan for the school to promote dignity and respect for everyone (e.g., race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, differing abilities, immigration status, family configuration).

SO.8.ADV.1 – Develop a plan for the school to promote dignity and respect for people of all sexual orientations in the school community

TARGET GRADE: Grade 7
Lesson 10

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Laptop
- Projector
- Screen
- Advocacy worksheet - one per student
- White board and markers
- Two signs - one “Yes” and one “No”
- Index cards - one per student
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students do not have their own

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]
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. Define advocacy [Knowledge]
4. Develop an action plan for their school to promote dignity and respect for everyone (e.g., race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, differing abilities, immigration status, family configuration) [Skill]

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Prior to the lesson please communicate with the school principal, vice principal, and student council to give them advanced notice that the students will be making and sharing action plans for the school to consider in order to promote dignity and respect for everyone.
- Print copies of the Advocacy worksheet for each student.
- Set up the Advocacy power point slides.
- Prepare one “Yes” sign and one “No” sign. If you have a whiteboard, you can just write those headings on the board.

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. 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

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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.*

- a. I often hear phrases like “that’s so gay,” or the word “gay” used in a negative way at school.
- b. I often hear terms like “faggot” and “dyke” used by my friends.
- c. 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.
- d. I have heard people use the word “girl” (e.g. you run like a girl) as an insult.
- e. I have personally had expressions like “that’s so gay” or “dyke” said to or at me or to my close friends.
- f. I have heard students say negative things about transgender people.
- g. Expressions like “that’s so gay” and “dyke” are never okay to use.
- h. 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?

(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 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)
- Hearing students stick up for other people
- Assemblies or guest speakers who have come in to talk about respect for others

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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. Write the word **ADVOCACY** on the board and ask the class the following question, "Can anyone tell me what advocacy means?"

NOTE TO THE TEACHER: *You are looking for an answer that includes, educating people and creating change to help others.*

Say, "**Educating other people about issues of importance can make a large impact. The more we learn, talk, and share the more we can create change which is a great thing. Can anyone tell me what an advocate is?**" Response should be a person or group of people who try to create change to help others. Say, "**So at this point I would consider all of you advocates for respect. As advocates, what are some things you would want to see changed 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.

(21 minutes)

STEP 4:

After the groups have completed their plans ask if there are any volunteers who would like to share what they have developed. Allow a few groups to share their plans. 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.**"

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Say, “Thank you for creating such thoughtful plans to share with the school. So, know that if you feel comfortable sharing these with the principal, vice-principal or student council, they all knew we were doing this lesson today. You might want to ask for a meeting during which you could present your plan.”

(10 minutes)

STEP 5:

In closing, say, “Respecting others is the bare minimum we can do as people to show other people that they matter. Advocacy is important work. In fact, there are professionals who make a career out of educating others on behalf of people who need additional support and change. So, while today might have been your first step in the world of advocacy, it doesn’t have to be your last. Thank you for your hard work.”

(2 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 “Where Do Your Stand” 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. Step 3 is designed to meet the third objective and Step 4 the fourth objective.

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK:

Research the provided list of youth advocates (<https://www.insider.com/young-activists-climate-change-guns-greta-thunberg-2019-9#shamma-bint-suhail-faris-mazrui-23-youth-advocacy-1>), select an advocate who inspires you and write a letter to this youth advocate explaining:

- 1) why they are an inspiration
- 2) asking how they became an advocate
- 3) one thing they would tell to someone who wants to advocate for change in a school