

More Than Friends: Understanding Romantic Relationships

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

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

HR.8.CC.3 – Analyze the similarities and differences between friendships and romantic relationships.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 6
Lesson 5

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Olivia and Dylan handout – one per every three students
- Aaron and Sophie handout – one per every three students
- Homework: “Relationships on TV” – one per student
- White board
- White board markers of at least two different colors
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe at least two characteristics of a friendship, and two characteristics of a romantic relationship. [Knowledge]
2. Identify at least two similarities and two differences between friendships and romantic relationships. [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 different kinds of relationships. Divide the class into groups of 3, and as they are getting into their trios, walk around and distribute one copy of the case study, “Aaron and Sophie,” to each trio. (3 minutes)

STEP 2: Once everyone has gotten settled, ask for a volunteer to read the story aloud to the class. Tell them that they will have about 10 minutes to answer the questions on the worksheet as a group. Ask them to decide who in their group will be the recorder, and have that person put all three group member names on the top of the sheet. (12 minutes)

STEP 3: When students seem to be close to finishing, distribute the second case study, “Olivia and Dylan.” Ask for a different student to read that story aloud. Ask the students to, once again, have their recorder write the group names on the top of the sheet, and then discuss and respond to the question. They will have 10 more minutes to work on that sheet. (12 minutes)

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STEP 4: After 10 minutes have passed (or the students have finished working), say, “Let’s start with Aaron and Sophie. What kind of relationship would you say this is?” Students will likely say, “friends” or “friendship” or “best friends;” write “friendship” on the board. Ask, “How do you know this is a friendship?” Probe for the actual characteristics. For example, someone might say, “Because they’re really close?” Ask, “How do you know they are close? What about what you read here shows they are close?” Ask the students to read their responses from their worksheets. Facilitate the discussion for these possible responses, proposing them if they are not mentioned:

- Talk about a lot of things
- Spend a lot of time together
- Are honest, even when it’s hard to be
- Fight but make up
- Stick up for each other
- Support each other by going to each others’ events
- Feel jealous

Once the list is created, go through each, asking the students which they’d consider to be positives, and which negatives. Put + signs and – signs next to the various characteristics accordingly. If there is disagreement, put both a plus and a minus sign, and talk about how/why each could be positive or negative. Discuss when something that seems to be a positive can turn into a negative, such as spending too much time together, or are honest in ways that end up being hurtful. (6 minutes)

STEP 5: Next, say, “Now let’s look at Olivia and Dylan. What kind of relationship would you say this is?” Students will likely say, “a relationship” or “boyfriend/ girlfriend.” Write the words, “Romantic Relationship” on the board. Ask the students to share the characteristics from their worksheet that describe this romantic relationship and write them beneath the words “Romantic Relationship.” Facilitate the discussion for these possible responses, proposing them if they are not mentioned:

- Have their friends talk for them rather than speaking directly
- Spend a lot of time together
- Get jealous
- Feel they have the right to do/know certain things (e.g., checking the other person’s phone)
- Make assumptions about what the other person is feeling
- Kiss and do other sexual things
- Find creative ways of getting noticed

Once the list is created, again go through each, asking the students which they’d consider to be positives, and which negatives. Put + signs and – signs next to the various characteristics accordingly. If there is disagreement, put both a plus and a minus sign, and talk about how/why each could be positive or negative. Discuss when something that seems to be a positive can turn into a negative, such as spending too much time together, or checking up on the other person nonstop. (6 minutes)

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STEP 6: Ask the students to look at the two lists and tell you what they notice about them. Depending on what is generated, they may notice similarities or differences. For the characteristics on both the positive and the negative lists that are similar, circle them in the same-color whiteboard marker. Once they have this visual, ask the following questions:

- What do you think are the main differences between a friendship and romantic relationship?
- How do you know when you're in a friendship or romantic relationship? Does something sexual have to happen? Or can you have a boyfriend or girlfriend without doing any of that?
- Do you think it's easier having a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend? Why? If there are these [indicate the list on the board] similarities, how is being in one kind of relationship different from the other? (8 minutes)

STEP 7: Say, "People tend to think of friendship and romantic relationships as really different – but as you just saw, there are some similarities, too. The question for everyone to think about is, would you expect a romantic partner to behave in ways – aside from sexually – that a friend wouldn't, or vice versa? Are there things you've learned from being in a friendship – such as being able to talk about what's going on – that you can use in your relationships?"

Explain the homework and distribute it to students, asking them to complete and return it next class. (3 minutes)

***Note to the Teacher:** The Dylan and Olivia example is intentionally gender neutral. This can provide a good opportunity to discuss same-sex relationships. As time allows, you can tell the students you notice they assumed Dylan was a boy (if they did). Some students will notice the lack of pronouns and ask right away, "Are they two girls?" As part of the facilitation, you can ask, "How is being in a relationship different for two boys or two girls?" as well as, "What if Dylan was transgender? How might that affect the scenario?"*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Having the students put all the group members' names on both case studies and collecting them will fulfill the first learning objective. The large group discussion after the small group work will help teachers assess the achievement of the second learning objective. The homework assignment will help to address both.

HOMEWORK:

"Relationships on TV" – instruct the students that they are to watch a tv show that has both friendships and romantic relationships depicted and complete the assignment about what they see.

Case Study: Aaron and Sophie

Names: _____

Instructions: Please read the following story and respond, as a group, to the questions listed beneath it.

Aaron and Sophie have lived down the hall from each other in the same apartment building since they were little kids. They have played together, stuck up for each other, fought with each other, played house and doctor and Xbox and American Girl dolls. Their parents gave them keys to each others' apartments and they come and go from each place as if they had two places to live. If something bothers either of them – even if it's something the other one did – they talk about it right away. Sophie is probably the only person outside of his family who's seen Aaron cry, and Sophie has told Aaron more about her dreams for the future than she's told her own sister. They do homework together and go to each others' events at school (Aaron is in the jazz band and Sophie plays soccer). Now that they're in the 8th grade, they have started liking other people as more than friends, and both would like to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. They talk with each other about who they like or don't like, and about who they can't believe likes them. Sophie really likes someone who's in jazz band with Aaron and even though Aaron doesn't like Sophie as more than a friend, he feels a little jealous. When they hang out later in the day, Aaron tells her, even though it's really hard, about how he's feeling. Sophie tells him she's felt the same, and reminds him that he's her best friend and that nothing will change that. They end up going out for pizza, where they see some other friends and they all have a really nice time together.

What kind of a relationship is this?

What five words would you use to describe their relationship, or how they are with each other?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Looking at those words, which would you say are POSITIVE, and which are NEGATIVE?

Please put a "+" next to the ones you think are positive, and a "-" next to the ones you think are negative.

Case Study: Olivia and Dylan

Names: _____

Instructions: Please read the following story and respond, as a group, to the questions listed beneath it.

Olivia is a newer eighth grade student, having just moved to the area over the summer. The first day of school, she notices Dylan, and thinks Dylan is kind of cute. Dylan sees Olivia and thinks she's cute, too. Olivia has already met a few students so Dylan asks someone to ask those students what they know about Olivia – especially whether she likes anyone. Olivia hears that Dylan's been asking about her and decides to find excuses to walk past Dylan's locker. Dylan pretends not to see her, until one day, Olivia pretends to trip and drops her books. Dylan helps her pick them up, they start talking, and decide to hang out after school. This leads to hanging out a few more days that week, texting and FaceTime every night, and finally, one afternoon when they're watching a movie, a kiss. Officially a couple, they spend as much time on their own as they can, kissing and touching each other. Everything's going great, although Olivia feels like other students are now interested in Dylan since they became a couple. She doesn't say anything because she doesn't want to seem jealous (even though she is). Dylan doesn't get why Olivia seems mad about something. She even asked to borrow Dylan's phone "to look something up," but then went through Dylan's texts. Dylan didn't like that, but didn't say anything. Besides, Olivia kissed Dylan when she returned the phone and that always fixes things! One afternoon, Olivia says, "So... you want to?" Dylan doesn't know what she's talking about, but doesn't want to show it so just nods and keeps kissing her. When Olivia starts taking off her clothes, Dylan realizes what's about to happen – but isn't sure it should. "Should I say something? Shouldn't we talk about it more first?" – all these thoughts start going through Dylan's head. Dylan's phone rings, and it's Dylan's mom saying she needs Dylan to come home. Dylan kisses Olivia and says, "You're so beautiful, I'll text you later," and runs out.

What kind of a relationship is this?

What five words would you use to describe their relationship, or how they are with each other?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Looking at those words, which would you say are POSITIVE, and which are NEGATIVE?
Please put a "+" next to the ones you think are positive, and a "-" next to the ones you think are negative.

Homework: Relationships on TV

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: For this assignment, you have to watch tv! Please watch a show you already know and like that has at least one friendship and one romantic relationship in it. Then complete the worksheet below.

Name of Show: _____

1. Describe one of the friendships depicted on the show. What characteristics that we discussed in class did you see shown? Were there any shown that we didn't mention in class? If so, list those below and then decide if you think those were positive or negative characteristics. What made them positive or negative?

2. Describe a romantic relationship you saw on the show. What characteristics that we discussed in class did you see shown? Were there any that we didn't mention in class? If so, do you think those were positive or negative characteristics? What made them positive or negative?

3. If you were to describe one lesson the people in the romantic relationship could learn from the ones in the friendship – or the other way around – what would it be?

