Thinking Outside the (Gender) Box

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

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

TARGET GRADE: Grade 4 and 5

TIME: 40 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board
- White board markers
- Pencils, in case students don't have their own
- Teacher Resource: Sample "Go Fish" Worksheet, cut in half as described in the 'Advance Preparation' section
- Student Worksheets #1 7, as many copies of the entire set as needed for the number of students in your class (see the advance preparation section)
- Teacher Resource: "Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish! Supplemental Information" – one copy
- Homework: "Gender Survey" – one copy per student

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Define the following terms: Sex assigned at birth, gender identity, cisgender, transgender, gender nonbinary and transgender [Knowledge]
2. Differentiate between a person's gender identity and gender expression [Knowledge]
3. Describe at least two gender role stereotypes and how they may have an impact on people who are not cisgender [Knowledge]
4. Identify at least one trusted adult in their lives they can go to with their questions about gender [Knowledge]

LESSON RATIONALE:

This lesson is intended to help upper elementary students understand the basic definitions related to gender identity and gender expression. It also explores the impact of gender role stereotypes. Using a twist on the classic card game Go Fish, this lesson encourages students to identify a trusted adult they can talk to with questions about these topics. The content in this lesson is critical as students develop their own identities and understand the identities of family and friends.

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Print out one copy of the Teacher Resource: Sample "Go Fish" Worksheet and cut it in half on the dotted line
- Make enough complete sets (1 – 7) of the Student Worksheets as you can for your students. Then make a partial set if the number of students you have is not divisible by 7 (for example, if you had 25 students, you would make three complete sets and then an additional copy of any four of the worksheets).

Note to the Teacher: *As you will read, this activity asks students to copy down definitions from each other. If your class tends to take longer for that type of work, and you're concerned about timing for the lesson, you can take out one of the vocabulary terms that needs to be defined from each sheet. Alternatively, if you have the time, you can extend the timing allocated for the activity part of the lesson.*

Last Revised: August 18, 2021

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PROCEDURE:

STEP ONE:

Introduce the lesson by asking students whether any of them have played the card game, "Go Fish." Ask a student who has played the game to share with the rest of the class what's involved. If no one says they know or remember the card game, describe it in the following way:

"Go Fish" is a card game where the players are holding cards in their hands that the other players can't see. The point is to get cards that match the cards you're holding. So if I had a 4, I'd ask another player, "Do you have any 4s?" If they have a 4, they have to give it to me. If they don't have a 4, they say, "Go Fish," and I have to find my 4 someplace else – either by asking another player or picking a card."

Explain that you are going to do an activity about the day's topic that's like "Go Fish," but it has to do with finding the definitions to vocabulary terms that relate to gender. Write the term "Gender" on the board and tell the students you're going to come back to that term in a moment.

(5 minutes)

STEP TWO:

Explain that everyone in the room is going to be given a worksheet that has three vocabulary terms on it. One of the terms will have its definition, and two won't. Everyone's sheet will be different. Tell students that, when you have distributed the sheets and said, "Go," they are to move around and ask individual students whether they have the definition for one of the terms on their sheet. If they do, they should read the definition to you for you to copy onto your sheet.

If the student doesn't have the definition you're looking for, they'll say, "Go fish!" Then they can ask you whether you have a term they need the definition for. If you have it on your sheet, read it to them so they can write it on their sheet. If you don't have the definition, tell them, "Go fish!" Then you'll both move on to ask other people for their definitions.

Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate, using the teacher guide sample. Explain that your example doesn't have anything to do with gender, you are just using it so they see how the game works. Hand the student the bottom half of the sheet you cut in half and ask them, "Do you have the definition for…" ending your question with one of your undefined terms. If they do, they should read it to you so you can copy it down. If they don't, they should say, "Go fish." Then they will have the opportunity to do the same with you.

Tell students they can only ask one student for one term at a time. If they are told to "go fish," they need to move on to another student, although they can return to that student later if they wish.

Once they have gotten all of their definitions, instruct them to continue to move around the room so they can help other students out. Tell them they should continue to do this until you call time.

Answer any questions from the students, and make sure they all have something to write with as you come around the room to distribute the sheets. Once students have begun moving around the room, circulate to make sure they understand the directions and to gauge how much time to give the activity.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER: *If mobility is an issue for any of the students, invite them to remain where they are and have their classmates visit them to participate in the game.*

(15 minutes)

STEP THREE:

After about 10 minutes, call time and ask everyone to return to their seats. Go through the definitions, writing each term on the white board as you go through them and asking for volunteers to share their responses. Ask students who weren't able to find one or both of their definitions during the game to write down the answer or answers they were missing. Offer corrections as needed, supplementing what they have in their definitions with what's in the Teacher's Resource. Answer any questions the students might have.

(10 minutes)

STEP FOUR:

Point to the term "gender identity," which was defined during the game, on the board and ask, "How do you let people know what gender you are?"

Possible answers might include:

- "By the way I dress"
- "By my name"
- "By what my hair looks like"

Explain that all of these examples of how we let people know – or express – the gender we are is called, "Gender expression." Write the term to the right of the other vocabulary words on the board.

Tell students that while everyone has the right to express their gender however they wish, we cannot necessarily assume a person's gender identity based on what we see on the outside. For example, one of you mentioned that you express your gender by [add in an example from the students]. Then ask students whether only people of one gender can express themselves in that way?

NOTE TO THE TEACHER: *An example of this would be if one of the students said they express their gender by their name. You can ask whether there are names that are used by people of any gender. If someone say, "Because I have long hair," you can ask whether people of any gender can have long hair, and so on.*

Ask students whether they have heard of the word "stereotype." If someone has, ask them to define the word, probing for something like, "When people believe something about one person to be true about other people who have similar traits to that person." Ask for some examples, going back as appropriate to the examples from the students.

Say something like, *"Stereotyping people is wrong because it means we are making assumptions about them based on what we see on the outside. While we sometimes guess correctly – for example, when we see a person with long hair who identifies as female – we cannot then assume that all people with long hair identify as female, or that only girls can have long hair.*

Gender stereotypes have also been used to limit people, mostly those who do not identify as cisgender boys or men. Can anyone think of examples of when they or someone they know were told they couldn't do something because of their gender identity or expression?"

If students cannot think of examples, you can share the following:

- Cisgender girls being told they can't play football or baseball or other stereotypically "male" sports
- School dress codes that require students to wear a certain uniform based on the sex they were assigned at birth
- Cisgender boys being told they are supposed to be tough and never show their emotions

Explain that a stereotype ends up limiting the person or group of people the stereotype is about, which also affects others who don't fit that stereotype.

(7 minutes)

STEP FIVE:

Explain that there is so much more to think and learn about when it comes to gender. Describe the homework assignment and ask students to complete it before the next class session.

(2 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Steps 2-3 are designed to achieve learning objective 1. Step 4 is designed to achieve learning objectives 2 and 3. The homework is designed to achieve learning objective 4.

HOMEWORK:

Students should identify an adult they know well and trust, whether a parent, family member or another adult in their lives, and conduct the gender survey assignment.

Teacher Resource

Sample “Go Fish” Worksheet

Instructions: Print out this sheet and cut along the dotted line in the center. Ask for a volunteer to help you demonstrate how to play the game.

TEACHER:

Grapes –

Apple –

Strawberry – A sweet red berry with seeds on it

Banana –

STUDENT:

Banana – A yellow fruit you have to peel to eat

Strawberry –

Apple –

Grapes –

Student Worksheet 1

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have three vocabulary terms relating to gender. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Gender identity: What a person knows their gender to be. This might or might not match what their genitals look like.

Find and write down the definitions for:

Cisgender: _____

_____

_____

Sex Assigned at Birth: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Cisgender: When what you know your gender to be matches the sex you were assigned at birth.

Find and write down the definitions for:

Transgender: _____

_____

_____

Gender Expansive: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Sex Assigned at Birth – The name – boy, girl or intersex – someone is given at birth based on what their genitals look like.

Find and write down the definitions for:

Gender Identity: _____

_____

_____

Gender Expansive: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Gender Expansive: People who live their lives showing that there are many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither

Find and write down the definitions for:

Transgender: _____

_____

_____

Gender Nonbinary: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Transgender: Describes a range of identities when someone's sex assigned at birth is different from what they know their gender to be

Find and write down the definitions for:

Cisgender: _____

_____

_____

Gender Expansive: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Gender: All the social stuff that goes with gender identity; like how people are told they're supposed to dress or act

Find and write down the definitions for:

Gender Nonbinary: _____

_____

_____

Sex Assigned at Birth: _____

_____

_____

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Instructions: On this worksheet, you have four vocabulary terms. Find the classmates who have these terms and their definitions, and copy down the definitions. YOU CAN ONLY GET ONE DEFINITION FROM EACH CLASSMATE! Good luck!

YOUR DEFINITION

Gender Nonbinary: Someone who doesn't feel like the words "girl" or "boy" describe who they are. They may feel like both or neither.

Find and write down the definitions for:

Cisgender: _____

_____

_____

Sex Assigned at Birth: _____

_____

_____

TEACHER RESOURCE

Find the Definitions – Or Go Fish!

Supplemental Information

Instructions: Use the following supplemental information as needed as you go through the definitions for each term. It's recommended that you go through the terms in the order that appears here.

SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH: The name – boy, girl or intersex – someone is given at birth based on what their genitals look like. Usually, when a baby is born, the doctor or other medical professional who delivers them will declare, "It's a boy" or "It's a girl" based on whether they see a penis and testicles or a vulva. Someone who is intersex may have a combination of genital body parts, or genitals that look like one sex, but inside, they have body parts of a different sex.

GENDER: All the social stuff that goes with the sex you're assigned at birth; like how people are told they're supposed to dress or act.

GENDER IDENTITY: What a person knows their gender to be. This might or might not match what their genitals look like.

CISGENDER: When how you feel about your gender matches the sex you were assigned at birth. For example, if you have a vulva and know yourself to be a girl, or if you have a penis and testicles, and know that you are a boy.

TRANSGENDER: When someone's sex assigned at birth is different from what they know their gender to be. That might be someone who has a penis and testicles but feels like he is a girl, or someone who doesn't feel like they're either a girl or a boy, but a combination of the two or something else altogether. "Transgender" or "trans" can be a term that describes a number of different gender identities, or can be its own identity.

GENDER NONBINARY:Someone who doesn't feel like the word "girl" or "boy" describes who they are. They may feel like both or neither. It is one of the identities that comes under the transgender umbrella.

GENDER EXPANSIVE: People who live their lives showing that there are many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither. Beyond breaking gender role stereotypes – like a cisgender girl who plays on the boys' football team – gender expansive individuals may wear clothing that is stereotypically attached to a particular gender, have facial hair but also wear makeup, and otherwise challenge how the world tells us we are supposed to express ourselves based on what our genitals look like.

Some definitions integrate concepts from WelcomingSchools.org

HOMEWORK

GENDER SURVEY!

Instructions: Choose an adult in your life you know well and trust, and ask whether you can interview them. Record your answers below!

Student Name: _____

First Name of Person Being Interviewed: _____

How Do You Know Them? _____

1. Were you ever told growing up that you should or shouldn't do something because of your gender?

Yes No

If yes: _____

_____

2. When you were growing up, did you ever see someone get into trouble because of how they expressed their gender?

Yes No

If yes: _____

_____

3. What message(s) about gender would you want people my age to get?

_____

_____

THANK YOU!

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