I Am Who I Am

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

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 7

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Laptop or desktop computer with PowerPoint on it
- PowerPoint presentation titled: "Understanding Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation"
- Regular letter-sized envelopes, one per student
- 8 ½ x 11 sheets of blank paper, one per student
- LCD Projector and screen
- Myth/Fact Quiz – one per student
- Myth/Fact Answer Key – one copy for the teacher
- Homework: "Fix This" – one per student
- Whiteboard
- White board markers
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Define the terms sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. [Knowledge]
2. Describe how each term is different from the others. [Knowledge]
3. Name at least two factual statements and two incorrect statements about sexual orientation and gender. [Knowledge]
4. List at least two respectful ways of communicating with or about LGBTQ individuals. [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: Begin the class by explaining that you are going to be talking today about identity. Say, "Identity has to do with who we are. For example, one of my identities is… [choose an identity of yours that is unchangeable, i.e., race, ethnicity, ability. This identity should not be related to your sexual orientation or gender.]. Because we are talking about human sexuality, our class is going to be looking at parts of our sexual identity, including our sexual orientation and our gender identity."

(2 minutes)

STEP 2: Distribute a piece of paper and envelope to each student. Tell them that they are going to be asked to write down two things on their sheet of paper, without putting their name on it.

Ask them to write down what they've heard about what the term "sexual orientation" means. Tell them that if they haven't heard anything, they should just try to guess what it means.

After about 4 minutes, ask them to write down what they have heard about the term "gender identity." Again, tell them that if they haven't heard anything, they should just try to guess what it means.

Once they are done, ask them to fold their sheet of paper into thirds (you may need to model this for them), put it in their envelope and seal their envelope. Tell them not to open it until they're asked to.

(8 minutes)

STEP 3: Go through the PowerPoint, "Understanding Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation."

(12 minutes)

Note to the Teacher: *This PowerPoint provides very basic information, so you may wish to allow additional time for questions. If these topics are newer or less familiar for you, you may wish to use your anonymous question box throughout class so you can look up any answers you don't know and provide them during the next class.*

STEP 4: Say, "Now that you've gotten a bit of an overview, let's see what you remember – as well as what else you know – about these topics." Distribute the worksheet, "Myth vs. Fact: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation" to each student. Instruct them to complete all the questions on their own without asking for any help. After a few minutes (or when all the students have finished), ask them to turn to a student sitting near them so the two can compare their answers. Tell them that they do not have to agree, but that they can feel free to change any of their answers as they wish.

(12 minutes)

STEP 5: Using the "Myth vs. Fact Answer Key", go through the answers with the students, ask for volunteers to read each statement and provide their answer. As you go through these, ask whether there was any disagreement on the various questions and whether they ended up changing their answers, and why.

(12 minutes)

Note to the Teacher: *This is another place where using the anonymous question box may be useful, as students may have more questions than class time will allow you to answer in the moment.*

STEP 6: Ask the students to think about all of the terms and examples you have just gone through, and to open their own envelope. Ask the class, "How many of you wrote down something about sexual orientation or gender identity that was correct?" After students have raised their hands, ask, "How many of you wrote down something that ended up to be incorrect, but that you now know the correct information about?" After students have raised their hands, praise their work and distribute the homework assignment. *(4 minutes)*

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Each of the in-class activities is intended to provide and reinforce the content taught, including the differentiation between the terms. The last activity in which students check their own perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity from the beginning of class will help the teacher determine whether the objectives have been achieved. The homework assignment is designed to achieve the fourth learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

Students will view a brief video clip online and complete a worksheet relating to what they saw.

Myth vs. Fact: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Quiz

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Please read the following statements and indicate whether you think each is a myth or a fact by circling the appropriate answer.

1. People can choose their sexual orientation.

MYTH FACT

2. People can choose their gender identity.

MYTH FACT

3. People can choose their gender expression.

MYTH FACT

4. You can usually tell a person's sexual orientation just by looking at them.

MYTH FACT

5. A girl who is really athletic is either a lesbian or transgender.

MYTH FACT

6. A person can look like a boy or a man and feel on the inside like they are a girl or a woman.

MYTH FACT

Myth vs. Fact: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Answer Key

Instructions: Please read the following statements and indicate whether you think each is a myth or a fact by circling the appropriate answer.

1. People can choose their sexual orientation.

(MYTH) FACT

Sexual orientation has to do with the gender(s) of the people we're attracted to, physically and romantically. We don't choose our feelings just like we don't choose who we find attractive. What we CAN choose is whether to act on those feelings, as well as what we call ourselves based on those feelings (our identity).

2. People can choose their gender identity.

(MYTH) FACT

Just like sexual orientation, a person doesn't choose to feel male, female or a combination of both. What we CAN choose is what we call ourselves, even if it doesn't match our physical body (male, female, transgender, etc.).

3. People can choose their gender expression.

MYTH (FACT)

A person can choose to let people know their gender in whatever way feels comfortable or right to them. That includes girls who wear dresses and are stereotypically "feminine," and girls who wear jeans and t-shirts and work boots and present as more stereotypically "masculine." There are lots of ways to express ourselves, and that includes how we express our gender. No one has the right to tell us how we do this is right or wrong, it just has to be right to us.

4. You can usually tell a person's sexual orientation just by looking at them.

(MYTH) FACT

Some people will stereotype another person based on their gender expression. Based on what they see, they will think they know that person's sexual orientation. For example, they will see a masculine guy and assume he is heterosexual. He may be, but he may not be. And while some people do fulfill stereotypes – that guy may very well be heterosexual – it does not mean, for example, that all masculine guys or all feminine girls are heterosexual. Sexual orientation has to do with who a person is attracted to; gender expression is separate from that.

5. A girl who is really athletic is either a lesbian or transgender.

MYTH FACT

This is another example of stereotyping. Athleticism is a talent and a skill that a person of any gender can have. Some people who are athletic are heterosexual, some are lesbian or gay, and some are bisexual; similarly, some are female, some are male and some are transgender.

6. A person can look like a boy or a man and feel on the inside like they are a girl or a woman.

MYTH FACT

Some people find the idea of being transgender easier to understand when what they see matches what they are being told. For example, when Caitlyn Jenner, who was assigned male at birth, announced she was transgender, many people struggled with understanding this because Bruce Jenner was a very masculine Olympic champion. Once she transitioned and looked like a woman, many people saw the connection. Another good example is Laverne Cox, who is a transgender actress. She is often accepted because she “looks feminine.”

At the same time, however, it’s important to remember that the outside doesn’t always have to match the inside. Even before Caitlyn, for example, started altering her appearance, when she was still known as Bruce, she felt on the inside that she was a woman. We can look one way, and feel totally different. How we feel on the inside – our identity – always takes priority over what is on the outside.

HOMEWORK: Fix This! Creating Respectful Classrooms for LGBTQ Students

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Read the scenario below. Then answer the questions that follow.

Scenario: Two of the most popular soccer players in school are walking down the hallway together and they spot a student who is rumored to be gay, although no one really knows. The soccer players shout, "Hey, you gay?" loudly to the student, loud enough so that everyone in the hallway can hear and many students laugh. The student ignores them, so the soccer players shout again, "Hey, I'm talking to you! Are you gay?" The student notices a teacher in the hallway watching all of this happen and the teacher doesn't say anything.

1. What things happened to make this an unsafe school environment?

2. Why do you think the teacher and other students didn't say anything to stop the disrespectful interactions?

3. What should they have done?