What Is Love Anyway?

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

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

ID.5.CC.1 – Define sexual orientation as romantic attraction to an individual of the same gender or of a different gender.

ID.5.AI.1 – Identify parents or other trusted adults to whom they can ask questions about sexual orientation.

SO.5.CC.2 – Differentiate between sexual orientation and gender identity.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 5 Lesson 4

TIME: 40 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Homework: "Defining Sexual Orientation" – one per student
- Index cards – one per student
- **PowerPoint: "Sexual Orientation"**
- Teacher's Guide: "Teaching about Sexual Orientation" – one copy for the teacher
- Desktop or laptop with PowerPoint on it
- Projector and screen
- Markers/chalk
- Flipchart paper or chalkboard/dry erase board

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe the difference between "liking" and "loving" [Knowledge]
2. Define "sexual orientation" and its most common categories [Knowledge]
3. Demonstrate that they have a trusted adult with whom they can speak about sexual orientation, among other sexuality-related topics [Skill]
4. Differentiate between sexual orientation and gender identity [Knowledge]

ADVANCE PREPARATION:

Be sure to go through the Teacher's Guide: "Teaching about Sexual Orientation."

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Start the session by asking students to take out a piece of paper and divide it in half by drawing a vertical line down the center.

Note to the Teacher: *Students can also feel free to use their tablet or laptop if permitted.*

Draw a similar line on the board. Then ask them to draw a horizontal line near the top, creating a "T". Do the same to demonstrate what you would like them to do. Then ask the students to write the word "Like" on the top of the left side of the division, and the word "Love" at the top of the right side. Do the same. When done, it should like this:

Like	Love

(2 minutes)

STEP 2: Tell the students you are going to give them 60 seconds to come up with a list of 5 (or more) things they LIKE. Tell them these cannot be people, they have to be things – objects, activities, places etc. Have them write what they like on the left side of their sheet or screen. Tell them to keep writing until you call time – but that they need

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to have a minimum of five. Let them know they will have the option of sharing examples of these, but will not be required to.

Stop them at 60 seconds. Next, ask them to come up with a list of 5 (or more) things they LOVE. Again, be sure to emphasize that these cannot be people, they have to be things – objects, activities, place, etc. Call time at 60 seconds. Say, "I am now going to ask for some volunteers to share something they said they like. Please remember that we always agree to respect our classmates, even if we disagree with something they may say. So if someone says they like something and you don't like it, please do not judge or make fun of their choice." Ask for some responses and write those on the board on the left side of the line. After the "like" side is filled, ask for examples of things they said they love and write those on the right side.

Once the table has been filled on the board, ask the students what they notice about the lists. Sample responses might include, "Some people put things on the 'like' side while other people put those same things on the 'love' side;" "They're very similar;" "They're very different," etc. Ask students:

"What was it like to do this?"

"Was it easier to think of things you like or things you love? Why?"

After students have shared some of their impressions of the experience of doing the activity, ask how they decided which things went on which list. Record key points from this feedback on the board, which may include references to the frequency with which they do something (the more they do it, the more they may like or love it); the duration relating to it (it could be something they've done every day after school or place they they've visited for several years); emotional connection to it (a gift from or something that used to belong to a relative or friend), something they're good at (playing a video game or a sport), etc. (12 minutes)

STEP 3: Explain that you will now be talking about people. Write an identical "T" with "Like" and "Love" written at the top of each side and ask the students, "Who are some of the people in our lives we might like, and who are some of the people we would say we love?" (Note: the list will be different every time, and that's okay. Also expect students to say some people can be liked or loved; if that is the case, write the person on both sides. Also, some students may see a person put up and ask, "What if you don't like or love them?" – such as a sibling. Acknowledge that this is a list of who we might have these feelings for and that some people may like or love a brother or sister. Finally, be sure to tell them that this must be people they know PERSONALLY – it should not include celebrities).

The figure might end up looking something like this, although the people and their placement may change:

Like		Love	
- A new student - A cousin - A mail carrier - A coach - The custodian in your building or school	- A new friend - A teacher - A friend's parent - Youth group leader - Religious leader - Camp counselor	- A friend you've had since you were very young - A cousin	- A sibling - A parent - A grandparent

Ask the students, "So, what's the difference? How do you know whether you like someone and when you love them?" Have a discussion about this highlighting, if it is not said, "you just know." Explain that our feelings are not something we decide to feel – we just like or dislike someone or something. Say, "While we may end up liking someone we didn't before – or liking an activity we hated at first – we can't sit down and say, 'I'm going to make myself like or love this activity or person.'" (12 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, "As we get older, our feelings start to change. We may experience a type of romantic love that we don't have when we're younger. It's really hard to explain, because just like the liking and loving we just talked about, it's something you know when you feel it." Explain that when people are older they may end up in romantic relationships with each other that are different from friendships. People might have boyfriends, girlfriends, partners – or, when they're older, they may choose to live together or get married. Sometimes, these adults will have children, and sometimes they won't.

Say, "Some people may want to have these types of relationships starting in middle school, and some aren't interested until high school or later." Ask, "What makes these types of relationships different from friendship or your relationships with your family members?" Probe for: "You do different things together," "you feel like being with that person all the time," "you like doing nice things for them and think of what they might want to do before what you might want to do," "you hold hands/kiss," "when you get older, you might want to have sex with that person," etc.

Say, "No matter at what age we start having these feelings of love and wanting to touch, kiss, etc., most people experience these feelings at some point in their lives – often, for different people over the course of their lifetimes." Start the PowerPoint and show the first slide as you say the following:

"Sometimes, we will feel this way about people who are a different gender than we are. Our gender has to do with being male, female, a combination of the two or neither. Our gender identity is our inner knowledge of what our gender is. It's connected to sexual orientation, but it's not the same thing. When someone is attracted to a person of another gender, that is called being 'heterosexual.' You may also hear the word 'straight.'" Advance to the second slide and then the third slide as you say, "Sometimes, we will have these feelings for people who are our same gender. This is called being 'gay.' Some gay women will call themselves 'lesbians.' And sometimes we might have feelings for people of all genders. This is called being 'bisexual.'" Explain that our understanding of which gender or genders we feel love and attraction for is called our "sexual orientation." Go to the fourth slide and say, "Even though the phrase 'sexual orientation' has the word 'sexual' in it, in many cases, people have strong feelings of love before feelings of sexual attraction or before acting on those feelings. You don't need to have done anything sexual with someone to know your sexual orientation."

Say, "As you start going through puberty, your hormones – those natural chemicals in your body – will start going up and down. This means you may feel really intense emotions from time to time – both positive and negative. This may also be when you start to feel more intense love. During puberty, it's common to have feelings for people of your same gender and for people of a different gender. Sometimes, that's part of understanding your sexual

orientation. Sometimes, it's not, and you'll have feelings that come and go. So you may not know what your orientation is right away, or until you're older – and that's okay." (9 minutes)

STEP 5: Explain that while love seems like a pretty straightforward term – we say "I love you" all the time; we talk about how we love this tv show, this shirt, is a really complicated topic and you only just touched on it. Distribute the index cards and ask students to write anonymously any questions they may have about sexual orientation.

Note to the Teacher: *These should be collected and either answered in the next class as you would with an anonymous question box, put into a handout and shared at the next class session or put into a handout and shared with parents so they have some guidance as to what their kids know and want to know about this topic.*

Distribute the homework and explain the assignment. (5 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The homework assignment will accomplish two things: first, it will check each student's understanding of the term "sexual orientation;" second, it will require students to identify a trusted adult with whom to share their definition.

In addition, the anonymous questions will, in the aggregate, give an overall impression of students' knowledge and understanding about sexual orientation.

HOMEWORK:

Ask students to complete the worksheet: "Defining Sexual Orientation," and return it during your next class session. Explain that the assignment involves both watching a short animated video from Amaze.org and then selecting a parent or trusted adult with whom to have a conversation.

Teaching About Sexual Orientation

Note: This teacher's guide is designed to accompany the PowerPoint presentation, "Sexual Orientation." Use it as a guide, or an actual script you can use to explain this topic to your students.

- As we get older, our feelings of romantic love are different from what we feel for friends or family members.

- Our gender has to do with our maleness, femaleness and/or combination of the two. The name that reflects what we know our gender to be is our gender identity. This might be male, female, transgender, nonbinary, or another name. Our understanding of which gender or genders we feel romantic love and attraction for is called our "sexual orientation."

- If people feel this way about people who are a different gender than they are, they are called "heterosexual.' You may also hear the word "straight."

- Sometimes, people will have these feelings for people who are the same gender as they are. This is called being "gay." Gay women are also sometimes called "lesbians."

- Some people might have romantic feelings for people of all genders. This is called being "bisexual."

- Even though the phrase "sexual orientation" has the word "sexual" in it, in many cases, people have strong feelings of romantic love before they have feelings of sexual attraction – or before they act on them. You don't need to have done anything sexual with someone to know your sexual orientation.

- As you start going through puberty, hormones – those natural chemicals everyone has in their bodies – will start going up and down. This means you may feel really intense emotions from time to time – both positive and negative. This may also be when you start to feel more intense romantic love.

- During puberty, it's common to have feelings for people of your same gender, of another gender, or of all different genders. Sometimes, that's part of understanding your sexual orientation. Sometimes, it's not, and you'll have feelings that come and go. So you may not know what your orientation is right away, or until you're older – and that's okay.

Homework:
Defining Sexual Orientation

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Instructions: View the short animated video from Amaze.org called, “Talking Sexual Orientation with Jane” available here: http://amaze.org/video/talking-sexual-orientation-with-jane/. Once you have watched the video, please write down your own definition of sexual orientation. Then, think of an adult you know well and trust who you could share this definition with. This could be a parent or other adult family member, a friend’s parent, someone at school, etc. Tell this person what we discussed in class and share your definition so that they also know what sexual orientation is. See if they agree with your definition, or whether they have another take and add that to what you have. Make sure they sign below!

1) Sexual orientation is:

(What I say):

(What the adult I asked says):

2) Did you learn about sexual orientation when you were growing up? If so, what did you learn?

(What the adult I asked said):

Name of adult: _____

Their signature: _____

Relationship to you: _____

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