🔖 OVERVIEW

Being a health educator requires a person to confront their own biases and address them in order to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students.

📋 RESOURCES

Ground Rules

Setting ground rules is crucial whenever reviewing sensitive topics! These can be called whatever works for your class and style (class norms, expectations, guidelines, rules, etc.), but should focus on privacy and mutual respect. There are a variety of lesson seeds on Canvas that can help with setting class norms.

The following are some important classroom expectations that help to create a classroom environment in which all students feel safe to learn and explore:

- Respect personal boundaries and comfort levels.
- No one is forced to share by the teacher or a peer.
- Share what you learn with family or other trusted adults.
- Encourage each other to share concerns or questions.

Responding to Student Identities

- Invite all students to contribute to class discussion - don't assume that the discussion is more relevant to some students than others.
- Do not "tokenize" students. Students (irrespective of background) should not be forced to serve as the spokesperson for their group. Students also should not be expected to know everything about issues relating to their group or to assume that all students from their group feel the same way about an issue.
- Be sensitive to the experiences of visibly underrepresented students in your class.
- Be aware of gender dynamics in classroom discussions.

- Be careful not to respond to comments in ways that students might interpret as dismissals. You should give sufficient attention to (a) students' comments that differ from the majority of students' views or your own views, (b) students' views that are based on experiential knowledge.

Creating a Productive & Inclusive Classroom Climate

- To maintain both student safety and engagement, it can be helpful for the teacher to be familiar with trauma informed practice.
  - Understand that discussion of sexual behaviors may be traumatic for students who are the victims of sexual abuse.
  - Follow HCPSS procedures on the **Student Services Canvas page** ███████████████████████████ for disclosure or concerns of abuse.
- Examine your assumptions and your biases.
- Welcome and know your students. Learn and use students' names; pronounce names correctly. Don't assume a particular nationality for students. DO not offer to change or shorten their names or give them nicknames. Don't assume students will have a particular interests based on appearance.
- Model inclusive language.
- Use multiple and diverse examples.
- Be intentional about establishing ground rules/classroom norms for interaction. Students can be involved in creating them, but the teacher needs to enforce them and correct students who violate them.
- Don't ask people to speak for an entire group.
- When creating scenarios, use names from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Include diverse cultural norms in examples and scenarios.
- Ensure that no cultural group is always making an unhealthy decision in scenarios.

Language Considerations

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, gender-neutral language is used to be inclusive of all students, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This includes the use of 'they' as a singular gender-neutral pronoun. The lessons use the terms 'male' and 'female' when referring to biological sex (sex assigned at birth), such as when discussing reproductive anatomy. A person's reproductive system can be male, female or intersex (not clearly defined as either male or female).

People are assigned a sex at birth based on their reproductive anatomy. Sex assigned at birth is independent of gender identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of identity as female, male, both or neither, regardless of their biological sex assigned at birth.

For many people, their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). Others may identify as being transgender or gender diverse if their gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. A person's gender identity can be girl, woman, boy, man, transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others. The intention in this material is to use language that reflects these many possibilities.

Review the below guidelines about avoiding biased language and actions in the classroom. Please note, these guidelines do not address *all* biases that a person may have; rather, they are meant to address several of the most common and most relevant for sexual health education.

- Gender
    - Avoid referring to students as "Mr." or "Miss."
    - Use students' self-identified pronouns, even if they differ from a student's gender marker.
    - Use biological terms, not gendered terms. Ex: "Person with a uterus" instead of "woman," "The penis" instead of "a man's penis"
    - Do not assign seats, groups, or partners based on gender. Ex: "Boys on this side of the room, girls on the other"
    - Discuss that ALL students have a gender identity as a component of their sexuality
- Race/Ethnicity/Nation of origin
    - When creating scenarios, use names from a variety of cultural backgrounds
    - Ensure that no cultural group is always making an unhealthy decision in scenarios
- Sexual Orientation
    - Use gender-neutral words when possible, such as the term "partner" instead of "boyfriend" or "girlfriend"
    - When creating scenarios that involve romantic or sexual relationships, use gender neutral names and pronouns
    - Include information about safe practices for all types of relationships
    - Discuss that ALL students have a sexual orientation as a component of their sexuality
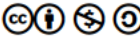
⊘ QUICK CHECK

⚡ **Quick Check**

Using culturally diverse names and norms in classroom activities and scenarios benefits the learning of all students and creates more inclusive instruction.

○ True

○ False

Check Answer