

Sexual Orientation & Community Programs/Policies

Lesson Objectives:

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

1. Define sexual identity [Knowledge]
2. Name at least three different sexual orientations. [Knowledge]
3. Identify ways to show respect to people of all sexual orientations at school.

PROCEDURE :

STEP 1: Tell students that today's lesson is going to be about sexual orientation. Say, "There's a lot of discussion in the media right now about sexual orientation - some of which is true, some of which isn't. Today's class is going to look at some of the language around sexual orientation and will focus on how a community can promote dignity and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities or expression."

Ask the class, "When you see a yellow flag out in the world - like by a construction site - what does that tend to mean?" Probe for "caution." Say, "A lot of times people are taught certain language around sexual orientation that is outright offensive or wrong - and other times, there are words that are sometimes okay and sometimes not. So depending on who or where we are, we may need to exercise caution before using them."

As we go along, it's very possible that some of these words or phrases will come up. If I hear one - and if I use one, which I may do as I go through today's lesson - I'm going to walk over here and put that word or phrase up on the list. If you've used a word or phrase and you see me put it up, please know you've done nothing wrong - you've actually helped me teach!" (3 minutes)

STEP 2: Ask, "Let's start with that term itself - what comes to mind when you hear 'sexual orientation'?" Possible answers you might hear include:

- Who you like
- Who you're attracted to
- Who you have sex with
- The first time you have sex
- Your sexual preference*

Write responses on the board. If any yellow flag language words (marked with an asterisk) are shared, walk over to the flipchart sheet, and write them there using the flipchart marker. Tell the class you'll come back to these terms later.

Share the definition of sexual orientation with the class. Explain to students that people can be attracted to more than one sex or gender, and that it's about who you love - so a person can know their sexual orientation even if they have never been in a relationship before.

Ask, "What names do we have for various categories of sexual orientation? For example, if someone is attracted only to people of a different sex, what might that person call themselves?" (Probe for "heterosexual;" chances are, you will hear "straight*." Be sure to

say, "Straight - or heterosexual" as you put "straight" up on the yellow flag language list). Ask for other ideas, which may include:

- Straight*
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Homosexual*
- Bi or Bisexual
- Queer*
- Pansexual
- Asexual

Note to the Teacher: The last three may not come up at all, and it's up to you as to whether you wish to go into them with your students. Some classes will need very basic information, while others may know a bit more or be a bit more knowledgeable and/or mature and thus be able to discuss the last two or three.

Once the list is up, ask students what they think about what each term means. Probe for:

- Heterosexual (Straight) - Describes an individual who is sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex
- Lesbian or gay (Homosexual) - Describes an individual who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex
- Bisexual - Describes an individual who is sexually attracted to people of both sexes. This is different from someone finding all people attractive. It just means that the other person's gender isn't the defining factor as to whether the bisexual person finds that person attractive or falls in love with them.

Note to the Teacher: If you choose to describe "pansexual", or if a student has used that term, this would be the time to explain what it means - that bisexual technically means "two," and pansexual means "many." So people who are attracted to more than two genders - including transgender individuals - may use the term "pansexual" rather than "bisexual."

- Queer* - All-inclusive umbrella term to describe a wide range of identities. (Students often struggle with this definition). It can be used in a number of ways: someone may feel like the other categories are too restrictive and don't describe them accurately. Someone may wish to take back the negative meaning of the word and use it as a positive way of describing who they are.
- Asexual - A person who does not experience sexual attraction but may experience other forms of attraction (ex. Intellectual, emotional) An asexual person can still fall in love with and be in relationships with other people, but these relationships do not include a sexual relationship.

Note to the Teacher: Some students will add in "transgender," mostly because they have seen the acronym, "LGBT." Explain the definition of transgender - Describes individuals whose gender identity differs from others of their biological sex. Be sure to tell students that being transgender is not about sexual orientation or who we are attracted to, but it is about how we understand our gender. For example someone may be male, or female, or transgender - and still have a sexual orientation. (12 minutes)

Community Programs/Policies Activity:

STEP 3: Say, “People of all sexual orientations are a part of every community. No matter what a person’s sexual orientation is, it’s important to show every person respect, and make sure they feel safe and included at school. Our last activity will be to generate a long list of ways we can support our LGBTQ+ community members in our school building.”

Divide students into groups of four. Pass out one of the Supporting our LGBTQ+ Friends handouts to each group. Explain that each group will have five minutes to come up with at least two ways they can show support to someone at school who is LGBTQ. To start, give the example, “not using slurs about gay or lesbian people.”

After five minutes, confirm that each group has at least two specific things listed and ask each group to switch their paper with another group. As each group receives a new paper, they should add two new ideas to the paper, different than they put on their original paper. Give groups another 5 minutes to work.

Ask students to come back together as a large group. Ask each group to share one thing on the handout they’re group currently has that they feel would be helpful in their school community (not the handout their group started with). Ask each group to share one way to respect people of all sexual orientations from their list and continue around the room until all ideas have been listed.

Some possible examples include:

- Hang pride flags or other signs that indicate that we welcome all people
- Invite someone to your group, table, or party who may be bullied because of their perceived sexual orientation
- Using language like, “partner” instead of boyfriend or girlfriend during sex ed class
- Start a GSA, or attend a meeting at school

Say, “We may not always know someone’s sexual orientation, but doing the things we talked about today shows is important to show respect to all people. We should do these things whether we’re near or interacting with someone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community or not.” (12 minutes)

STEP 4: Say, “Before we finish up, I want to come back to this Yellow Flag Language list here on the board.” Go through each of the terms that are up there, supplementing as necessary from the “Teacher’s Guide: Yellow Flag Language.” Once you have gone through them all, ask if there are any other terms students have heard and if so, add them to the list and talk about why they should be used with caution.

Note to the Teacher: If a student uses an inappropriate term, be sure to explain that they are red flag and derogatory words (examples). Explain that the words should not be used in or outside of the classroom because they are offensive. Use the statement below to respond to red flag words in the classroom:

“That term is considered a red flag term because it is a derogatory term. We will not use that term in this classroom and it should also not be used outside of the classroom because it is an offensive term.”

Resources for Teachers:

Yellow Flag Terms Chart

YELLOW FLAG TERM	RECOMMENDED TERM	REASON(S)
Homosexual	Gay or Lesbian	<p>“Homosexual” was used as a mental health diagnosis until the early 1980s when it was no longer seen as a mental disorder by the American Psychological Association.</p> <p>Today, “homosexual” is often shortened to “homo,” which is used as an insult to people who are or are perceived to be gay (or to heterosexual people to mean they’re stupid, like “that’s so gay”).</p> <p>Yet, it is also an accurate category of sexual orientation that some people still use. If someone identifies as “homosexual,” someone else can’t say “you can’t use that term.” It’s their right to use whatever term feels right to them.</p>

Straight	Heterosexual	<p>The opposite of “straight” is “bent” or “crooked.” This can imply that there is something wrong with someone who is not heterosexual.</p>
Sexual preference	Sexual orientation	<p>“Preference” is a term that’s used only about non-heterosexual orientations. It is intended to minimize those who are anything other than heterosexual by implying their orientation is simply something they prefer, rather than who they are.</p> <p>This is a “yellow flag” term because bisexual and pansexual people may say, “I am attracted to people of all genders, but I tend to prefer being in relationships with _____.” In that case, the use of the word “preference” is correct.</p>
Choice	It depends: Orientation, Behavior, Identity	<p>Implying that a person’s orientation is a choice is offensive. Heterosexual people do not choose to be heterosexual, it’s who they are. Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual and other people do not choose to be their orientation, they are who they are.</p> <p>People do not choose their orientation (their feelings of attraction). They DO, however, choose how, whether and with whom they act on their feelings (behavior). They also choose what to call themselves (identity). This is why “choice” is a cautionary word - depends on how it’s used.</p>
Sexual Lifestyle or Gay Lifestyle	Sexual Orientation	<p>“Lifestyle” refers to the manner in which a person lives their life. There is no such thing as one heterosexual lifestyle. Heterosexual people live very diverse lives. They have all different kinds of jobs. They are in short- and long-term relationships, they marry, they divorce, they have children, they travel, etc.</p> <p>Lesbian, gay, bisexual and other people also lead very diverse lives. They have all different kinds of jobs. They are in short- and long-term relationships - they marry, they divorce, they have children, they travel, etc.</p> <p>“Lifestyle” or “gay lifestyle” is a term used to make heterosexual people feel afraid of and disgusted by non-heterosexual people by creating stereotypes about how they live. When someone is depicted as different and less than human, it is easier to discriminate against them. Therefore, sexual orientation is always preferred over these terms.</p>

Queer	Queer, If...	<p>Many people who belong to social or power minority groups will sometimes use offensive terms among themselves in order to defuse the negative power of and reclaim these words. Many lesbian, gay, bisexual and other people identify as “queer,” and many do not. This will be confusing to heterosexual people who don’t understand why it is offensive when they do the same.</p> <p>As a general rule, it is best to use lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual. Don’t use “queer” or any other term unless a person tells you that that is how they prefer to be identified.</p>
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Red Flag Terms

****This page is a teacher resource ONLY!!****

Teachers should not bring up or mention red flag terms in the classroom at any time. If a student says a red flag term, that is when a teacher should address the term as red flag and use the statement provided below to explain that red flag terms are inappropriate. Red flag terms are inappropriate, derogatory terms. (Some of these terms may include fag, faggot, dyke, homo). If a student mentions a red flag term in class, please use the following statement to respond:

“That term is considered a red flag term because it is a derogatory term. We will not use that term in this classroom, and it also should not be used outside of the classroom because it is an offensive term.”

Worksheet: Supporting our LGBTQ+ Friends.

Using the spaces below, please identify two specific ways you can show respect to people of all sexual orientations. One example may be:

- Not using slang or slurs for people who are LGBTQ+

Group #1:

1.

2.

After completing the first two, please switch worksheets with another group.

Group #2:

1.

2.