

Gender and Sexual Orientation: Understanding the Difference

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

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

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Purchase two greeting cards that would be given to someone who just had a baby, one that would stereotypically be given to a parent of a baby boy, and one that would stereotypically be given to a parent of a baby girl. If you can find the same or a similar version of the cards for the genders, that's ideal; otherwise, two that are clearly gendered as "male" and "female" will work.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- White board and markers (have several different colors)
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- Two greeting cards for parents of a new baby as described in "advance preparation"
- LCD Projector and screen
- Worksheet: "Gender Scripts" – one copy for one third of your students
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- Flipchart paper
- Flipchart markers
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Define sexual orientation, biological sex, gender and gender identity. [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.

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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: Greet the class by saying, “I wonder whether you all could help me. A friend of mine just had a baby, and I went to the store to get a congratulations card and narrowed it down to two, but I can’t decide on which to send. What do you think?”

Hold up the two greeting cards to the class. Someone will ask right off that bat, “Is it a boy or a girl?”

Say, “Good question! That’s the same question that’s asked when a baby is born so they can announce the baby’s biological sex. Now, where do we look to answer that question, at the baby’s nose?” The class will likely laugh and say that we look between the baby’s legs. On the board write a vertical line. Write the word penis at the top left. As you write, say, “In most cases, we will see a penis or we will see a vulva.” Write “vulva” on the right side of the vertical line next to “penis.”

Say, “But this isn’t what makes us who we are. There are also our chromosomes. If we have a penis, chances are our chromosomes will be ‘XY’.” Write “XY” beneath “penis.” Say, “If we have a vulva, chances are our chromosomes are ‘XX.’” Write “XX” beneath “vulva.”

Say, “But this isn’t all, either. There’s also how we play our part in reproduction – if we have a penis and XY chromosomes, we usually have ‘testes.’” (Write “testes” beneath “penis” and “XY”). “If we have a vulva and XX chromosomes, we usually have ‘ovaries.’” (Write “ovaries” beneath vulva and XX). “Testes is where sperm and testosterone are made, and ovaries are where eggs and estrogen are made.”

Note to the Teacher: *The lists should look like this when done:*

<i>Penis</i>	<i>Vulva</i>
<i>XY</i>	<i>XX</i>
<i>testes</i>	<i>ovaries</i>

Say, “If we have all three in this left column, the announcement is usually ‘it’s a boy!’ and if we have all three in the right-hand column, we’ll hear, ‘it’s a girl!’

Explain to the class that in some cases, something happens to make one of these categories different – someone might have XYY chromosomes, or they might have a vulva on the outside but no uterus on the inside. Explain that there are many different variations – and that when they occur, the baby is known to have a “Difference of Sex Development.” A really old term for this that’s not used anymore is “hermaphrodite;” you might also hear “intersex.”

Ask students which card they would give to the new baby if the announcement were “it’s a boy” vs. “it’s a girl” and why. After a few answers, say, “Everything I just shared with you up here has to do with our biology – our biological sex.” (Write “biological sex” on the

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board). “How we respond to that biology – like what kinds of cards we send, or what kinds of clothes we wear or toys we have children play with – all has to do with gender.” (Write “gender” on the board.)

Say, “In most cases, babies are born with one of the two scenarios I just described, and are called either ‘boys’ or ‘girls.’ In most cases, as a child starts to grow up, this biology matches how they feel on the inside. A person will look in the mirror and see a penis and testicles or breasts and a vulva and feel on the inside, ‘I’m male’ or ‘I’m female.’ When what someone is called at birth matches how they feel on the inside, that person is called ‘cisgender.’

Sometimes, however, what a person sees in the mirror doesn’t match how they feel on the inside. They might see a penis and testicles and think, ‘but I’m not a boy.’ That person may call themselves ‘transgender,’ or simply, “female’ if that is how they feel.

However we feel on the inside – whether it matches our bodies or not – is our gender identity. [Write “gender identity” on the board.] And as you’re going to see in a minute, our identity is more powerful than our physical bodies or what we do with those bodies.”

Some of these terms are connected to – although different from – sexual orientation. [Write “sexual orientation” on the board].

Note to the Teacher: *When you are done, here are the terms that should be listed on the board – biological sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation.*

Say, “Sexual orientation has to do with the gender or genders of the people to whom we are attracted, both physically and romantically. This is different from our sense of what our gender is. We all have both a gender identity and a sexual orientation.

For example, a person whose biology at birth was characterized as “female” and who also feels female on the inside [write a woman symbol on the board] who is attracted only to people whose biology at birth was characterized as “male” and who also feel male on the inside [write a man symbol on the board, followed by an equal sign] will likely identify as heterosexual. If she does, the fact that she identifies as a woman [circle the woman symbol] and that the partners she’s attracted to identify as men [circle the man symbol] – these are their gender identities. The fact that they’re attracted to each other [circle heterosexual in a different color] is their sexual orientation.” (10 minutes)

Note to the Teacher: *This is what the board should like for this section –written near the list of terms from the previous section.*



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Say, “Regardless of our gender identity, we are getting lots of messages about what is or isn’t okay to say, do or wear based on who we are.” Write the word “gender script” on the board. Ask, “Has anyone here been in a play yet at school? What does a script tell us in a play or movie or tv show?” Probe for it tells us what we should say, how we should move and how we should react to others. Say, “So our gender scripts are how we’re told to behave based on the answer to that question when we’re born: Is it a boy or a girl?”

Divide the class into groups of three. Say, “I am going to give you all a sheet of paper and would like to ask you to think about the gender scripts you have gotten or have heard about people of a different gender from yours. For right now, we’re just going to talk about boys and girls.”

Distribute the handout, “Gender Scripts” and tell students they will have about 10 minutes in which to complete it. (14 minutes)

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STEP 2: After about 10 minutes, ask students to stop their work. Create two lists on the board and go around the room, asking individual students to share an example from their lists. Record their responses.

Once all the responses are on the board, ask the following questions:

- What do you notice about the two lists?
- How did you know that these were the gender scripts growing up?
- From where/whom have you been receiving these scripts?

Say, “So far, we’ve been talking about people who are assigned ‘male’ and ‘female’ at birth. In most cases, people who are assigned ‘male’ at birth have a penis and testicles, and how they feel on the inside matches those body parts. It makes sense to them. Same thing for people who are assigned ‘female’ at birth – they have a vulva and ovaries and a uterus, and how they feel on the inside matches those parts.

Sometimes, however, the body parts are different from how a person feels on the inside. That person may call themselves ‘transgender.’ How might someone who identifies as transgender react to these scripts?” (11 minutes)

Student Worksheet: Gender Scripts

Name: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: From the time we are born, we are told how we are supposed to act, dress and speak based on the sex we are assigned at birth – just as if we had been given a script and asked to follow it throughout our lives. In the space below, please provide examples of some of the messages you or people close to you have received about how we are supposed to behave based on whether someone is assigned “male” or “female” at birth.

ASSIGNED FEMALE

ASSIGNED MALE

. My Friend is Transgender

Name: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D07wSU1tCA> and Play the Amaze.org video “My Friend is Transgender”. Once you are done, please answer the questions below.

1. Cassie goes to the store to buy clothes for her friend Glenda who is embarrassed to buy for herself. What are some other activities that a transgender person might be embarrassed or uncomfortable to do? Why do you think these activities would be challenging?

2. When Jim finds out Glenda is transgender, why do you think he does not want to be friends with her even though Jim has known Glenda since they were young? Do you agree? Why or Why not?

3. Glenda says that she is taking her time to tell people that she is transgender and asks Jim to respect her and keep this information to himself. Why is it important for Glenda to tell people and not Jim? How do you think Glenda would feel and what could happen if Jim chose not to respect her request?

4. Jim thinks that gender identity is very simple: if you have a penis you're a boy, if you have a vagina you're a girl. What are some suggestions you would have for helping Jim understand more accurately about gender identity and having a transgender identity?