

# Climate Setting Lesson

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

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

**TARGET GRADE:** Middle School

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Flip chart paper
- A poster and/or slide with the ground rules pre-written on it
- A flipchart or slide with schedule/agenda for curriculum including *dates* and *topics*
- 'Agree' and 'Disagree' signs
- Masking Tape

## ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Print Subject to the laws of your state and the policy of your district, notify parents/guardians of Rights, Respect, Responsibility unit at least 2 weeks in advance of lessons.
- Read the [Rights, Respect, Responsibility Teacher's Guide](#) for detailed guidance about providing sexuality education
- Tape *Agree* and *Disagree* signs on either side of the room signs on either side of the room
- Decide which group agreements, from the list below, you would like to include in your classroom. These have been specifically identified for use in sexual health classrooms:
  - Right to pass
  - Use "I" statements
  - Treat people respectfully
  - Check assumptions
  - One at a time
  - Minimize side conversations
  - Phones off and away
  - Questions are welcome
  - No personal stories
  - We will have differences in opinion about sexual decision-making; it's okay to disagree respectfully.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Identify the ground rules and expectations of the *Rights, Respect, Responsibility* curriculum.
2. Know what to expect for the Sexual Health Unit including content and lesson sequence.
3. Demonstrate respect for differences and personal values.

## LESSON RATIONALE:

Establishing ground rules, which are shared guidelines about how everyone – teachers and students – will interact during lessons, is an important step in creating a sense of trust, support, and safety among students and teachers.

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Ground rules help to increase comfort and facilitate learning for everyone in the classroom.

Likewise, being clear about the topic and content of the lessons is a best practice of trauma-informed education. It is critical for establishing a sense of safety. This first lesson introduces the type of topics, while teaching the skill of being able to respectfully disagree with peers on sensitive issues.

### PROCEDURE

#### STEP 1:

Introduce yourself, if you are new to this group of students.

Say, "Today we will be starting the *Rights Respect Responsibility* curriculum and it will be about healthy relationships, anatomy, gender, sexuality, pregnancy and STDs. Many of you may have had classes on topics like this before, and for some of you, this may be new information."

Ask if students had any classes on sexuality, puberty, anatomy or healthy relationships in an earlier grade.

Ask students the following discussion questions:

- How did these classes go?
- What did you learn?
- How did it feel to be in a sex education class?
  - *If they say it was "Awkward", acknowledge that "yes, it may feel awkward to talk about topics that you are told are supposed to be private. It's ok to feel awkward, embarrassed, or uncomfortable."*
- What do you think that you should have talked about in that class but didn't?

(5 minutes)

#### STEP 2:

**NOTE TO THE TEACHER:** *Information on the ground rules can be found on pages 14-15 of the Teacher's Guide under "Using Ground Rules with this Curriculum"*

Say, "We will have some ground rules for this whole class which are designed to ensure a safe, comfortable, respectful learning environment in which everyone can share freely. Has anyone been in a class with ground rules before? How did that work?"

Ask students, "What are some ground rules you'd like to see in this class as we talk about sexual health, relationships, bodies, and consent? Some examples students may offer are:

- Feeling respected by my peers
- Not laughed at when I ask a question
- Not talking over me

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As students make suggestions, write their answers on the board, flip chart paper, or digital screen for all to see.

Then, introduce the group agreements that are included in the list below. Invite students to take turns reading each one and leave time for you to define/describe/clarify each one.

- Right to pass
- Use “I” statements
- Treat people respectfully
- Check assumptions
- One at a time
- Minimize side conversations
- Phones off and away
- Questions are welcome
- No personal stories
- We will have differences in opinion about sexual decision-making; it’s okay to disagree respectfully.

Say, “We now have a list of lessons that have been co-created by you all as students and me, as the facilitator. Do these seem reasonable to you? Do they feel like a fit for our class?”

Get buy-in and ask for agreement by thumbs up. Some teachers ask students to sign the poster.

For every class moving forward, make sure to have a list of the group agreements visually displayed for student reference. Ground rules are a great tool to reinforce appropriate behavior. They should be posted at the front of the class and you can refer back to them if discussion or behavior gets off track.

(10 minutes)

### STEP 3:

Review curriculum schedule and topics using the unit plan that has been confirmed for your school or district. Include the lesson name and the topic if it’s not clear. Have a slide or poster that you can post every day of the curriculum for students to refer to.

Example:

- Lesson 1: (Today), Introduction Lesson
- Lesson 2: (date), Healthy or Unhealthy Relationships?
- Lesson 3: (date), The Love Me, They Love Me Not... (dating violence)

(5 minutes)

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### STEP 4:

Introduce the first activity by saying, “Everyone has different opinions. We are going to examine some of those opinions. Here’s how this will work: I will read a statement and you will go to the side of the room that reflects your belief.”

Direct students attention to the “AGREE 👍” and “DISAGREE 👎” signs on either side of the room.

**NOTE TO THE TEACHER:** *A variation of this is to create four options for students instead of two, labeling each corner of the room, “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree.”*

Read the statements on the Values Voting Teacher’s Guide one at a time and have students move to the Agree or Disagree side of the room after each statement. You won’t have time to use all of them, so choose the ones that are most relevant for your students.

**NOTE TO THE TEACHER:** *If you have students with movement limitations, you could give each student two half sheets of paper, one labeled “Agree” and one labeled “Disagree” and have students for them to vote on each statement from their seats.*

Ask students to share their why they selected Agree or Disagree in one of the following ways: turn to the person next to you to share; get into a group of 3 and share; ask if a student from each side would like to say why they are standing on that side.

Remind students of the Ground Rule that was just established about respecting each other’s differences of opinion. Students are speaking to the statement, NOT arguing with each other’s opinions.

**NOTE TO THE TEACHER:** *Through this exercise, students are learning the skill of respecting that other people have difference opinions, or different interpretations of the same situation, and it does not invalidate another person’s opinion. Prevent students from arguing with each other. If there are only 1-2 students on a side, stand near that student.*

(15 minutes)

### STEP 5:

Distribute index cards or ¼ size scrap paper to each person — these are for Anonymous Questions/Exit Tickets.

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Say, “Every time we have this class, I’m going to hand out these cards at the end of class for you to write *any question* about sex, relationships, gender, anatomy, or anything else related that you are wondering about. If you don’t have a question, I’ll give you something else to write. I am going to collect the cards (or “you are going to put them in this question box”) and answer them during the next class, which will be \_\_\_\_\_. If you don’t have a question, think of a question that someone else in the class might have.”

Say, “If you can’t think of a *single* question, write down what you think we *should* talk about during this class” (or “what you learned during this class” or “what you learned about *last* year,” etc.)

(5 minutes)

### RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Students accomplish Objective 1 in Step 2, Objective 2 in Step 3, and Objective 3 in Step 4.

### HOMEWORK

None.

Advocates for Youth thanks Megara Bell for writing this lesson.

# Teacher's Guide: Values Voting

Validate different opinions. Let this be organic and start conversations. There aren't right or wrong answers here. Let your students talk more than you. Just keep it positive and respectful.

- 1. I like french fries better than ice cream**
  - a. Just a starter. Don't allow debate on this point. Point out that there are not right/wrong answers but different opinions and perspectives.
- 2. High school students are too young to have sex**
  - a. It's more important to honor your OWN values and beliefs than for all of you to have the same values
- 3. This school would be supportive of a student coming out as LGBTQ**
  - a. Keep it respectful. This is a question about how accepting the community is, not about the legitimacy of someone's orientation. What about a teacher/staff? More or less supportive?
- 4. If I had a sexual health question, I would ask someone in my family**
  - a. What if it was a question about sex? Who would that be?
- 5. If I had a sexual health question, I would ask someone at my school**
  - a. Who would that be? Important to *identify* staff members that young people can go to.
- 6. It's ok to share your passwords**
  - a. Why might this not be a good idea? What would your family say about this?
- 7. Lots of young people learn about sex from the internet**
  - a. What's the possible problem with this? (disrespectful, incorrect info, inappropriate...)
- 8. It's ok to send nude pictures to someone you trust**
  - a. Why or why not? Is it ok for someone to break that trust?
- 9. It's ok to be disrespected in a relationship as long as the person loves you**
  - a. If someone respects you as a person, how will they treat you?
- 10. People should date someone around their own age**
  - a. Why? What is the problem with a big age difference?
- 11. Jealousy is a sign that someone loves you**
  - a. Or is jealousy just someone being insecure? Or controlling? Sometimes people blame jealousy for really hurtful things they do.
- 12. Condoms should be made available to high school students**
  - a. Why or why not? Young people can purchase condoms in stores. They can also go into community health centers and pick them up for free. Is this the responsibility of schools?

# AGREE



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# DISAGREE

