

Our Space, Safe Space

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

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

NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 12th grade, students will be able to:

ID.12.SM.1 – Explain how to promote safety, respect, awareness and acceptance.

ID.12.ADV.1 – Advocate for school policies and programs that promote dignity and respect for all.

PS.12.ADV.1 – Advocate for safe environments that encourage dignified and respectful treatment of everyone.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 10
Lesson 6

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Desktop or laptop computer with PowerPoint loaded onto it
- LCD projector and screen
- PowerPoint: "Advocating for Change at School"
- White board and markers
- Extra pencils in case students do not have their own

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

Locate and review your current district policy relating to LGBTQ people, as well as any school-specific information relating to safe spaces.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Identify at least two things their school does well around LGBTQ inclusion, and at least two things they could improve upon. [Knowledge]
2. Demonstrate an understanding of what advocacy and lobbying are, and how they can be used to make change at school. [Knowledge]
3. Demonstrate how to make a persuasive argument for policy change. [Knowledge, Skill]

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. 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: Explain that today's class is going to look at your school's environment around equality and inclusion, honing in on how the school is doing around making sure people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are respected.

Begin the PowerPoint, going through slides 1 – 3, which define advocacy and lobbying.

Go to the next slide with the pictures of the puppy and kitten on it. Make four groups of about equal size with two being "dog" groups and two being "cat" groups. Say, "I'd like you to pretend that our school is looking to change its mascot. The school has narrowed their selection down to two options, either a dog or a cat. The members of the two groups that were assigned 'dog' need to make a strong case for why a dog should be the school mascot. The other two groups need to make a strong case for why a cat should be the school mascot. All groups will be presenting their argument to me and I will make the final decision."

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Say, “Before you start working, there are a few things about me you need to know as you make your case:

- I am allergic to cats, but have always wanted one
- I currently have a dog, and students often see me at the park with my dog

Note to the Teacher: *Even if these statements about you are not true, please either use them as written, or add in your own statements about how you feel about cats and dogs.*

I’m going to give you about five minutes to talk in your small groups and come up with several key points that you think would make a strong case for a cat or dog being the mascot.” Answer any questions, and ask them to get started. (10 minutes)

STEP 2: After about 5 minutes, call time. Say, “Okay, I’d like you to pretend I’m the principal of our school. You need to convince me that your animal is the best choice for our school. Please select one person from your group to be the representative who will make a one-minute appeal to me about their group’s animal. Once I have heard all the arguments, I will make a decision.

Remember, you ONLY have one minute... so you want to be as persuasive as you can be to get me to choose your animal. Maybe make some notes about your key points? How would you use what I told you about how I feel about cats and dogs? Good luck!”

Choose one group at random to go, and ask the representative from that group to make their case. When that person has gone, please ask a representative from the second group that had the same animal to add in anything the first group did not say. As they are speaking, write key points on the whiteboard from their arguments. Do the same with the second animal.

Consider what was presented, and then, as the principal, make your decision. Go through the bullet points and explain why. Say, “It’s not that the other group did not make a good case for their animal, but here is why I went with this one.” (6 minutes)

STEP 3: Process by asking the following questions:

- What was it like to do that? What was [fill in class responses] about it?
- What was it like to come up with your pitch? What was [fill in responses] about it?
- How did you decide what information to use to convince me? What else would have been useful to know about me in making your arguments?
- How did your own thoughts and feelings about and experiences with your group’s animal affect the experience?
- How did you decide who in your group would present on behalf of everyone? (If a group selected more than one person, ask about that person as well.)

Say, “What you just did was lobbying. You had an issue, you got some information about the person whose decision you were trying to influence (in this case, I gave it to you, but this was just a sample activity!), you gave compelling reasons for why I should support your cause, and I made a decision.” (5 minutes)

STEP 4: Go to the next slide in the PowerPoint, titled, “Why Do We Lobby?” Go through it and the next slide, stopping on the following slide, titled, “The Issue & The Ask.”

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Say, “Because this class is part of sex ed, we’re obviously not going to try to put something together for the Principal about the school mascot, or the type of food in the cafeteria, or whether people should be required to take certain courses. We’re going to look specifically at the school environment around being a safe, welcome space for students and family members of all sexual orientations and gender identities.”

Ask, “Generally speaking, what do you think our school does well around this topic?” Give an example you know about your own school. Record student responses on the board beneath a header titled, “We Do These Well.” After you have generated that list, write a header to the right of the first header titled, “We Could Improve on These.” As you are writing, ask students what they think your school could do better on. Record their responses beneath the second header.

Note to the Teacher: *These lists will vary based on the school you are in, but sample efforts that students may say their school could improve on include:*

- We don’t have a GSA
- There are no all-gender bathroom signs
- There are celebrations for different historical months and weeks, but nothing for LGBTQ people (pride)
- There is a lesson in Social Studies on historical LGBT people
- The policy around the prom and other school events only allows different-sex couples to attend together
- There is a dress code, which requires people to wear a particular uniform even though they identify as a different gender
- There is a lot of homophobic language in the hallway (e.g., “you’re so gay” and more)

Once you have put together the two lists, focus on the ones that students said they feel the school could improve upon. Discuss, as a class, which one of these things they think is most important – as well as realistic – and focus in on only that one. Then say, “Okay – let’s see what we can do about it.” (10 minutes)

STEP 5: Divide the class into groups of three. Say, “Please work in your groups to come up with what you think are persuasive arguments for making this change at school. I will give you about five minutes to come up with what you think are the strongest arguments you could present to the Principal. I’m looking for quality of argument, not necessarily quantity.” After about five minutes, ask students to stop their discussions. (5 minutes)

STEP 6: Say, “I’m going to start recording people’s arguments up on the board. Please take notes on what goes up on the board, as it will be part of your homework assignments.” Ask for a volunteer to go first, instructing the other students to cross off anything on what they came up with that has already been stated to avoid repetition.

Once everyone has gone, go through the list and ask whether anyone would make any suggestions to make any of the arguments stronger. Once you have done that, say, “Okay, so we decided on the one thing we’d want to change, and we’ve come up with some

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strong arguments. Now, let's look at what we do next if we can lobby the Principal to make this change happen." (8 minutes)

STEP 7: Return to the PowerPoint and go through the next few slides, through "What Should You Do If the Principal is Indecisive?". Say, "I don't know whether we can actually get a meeting with the Principal about this – but the homework assignment is going to assume that we can. So if we can, we need to be prepared!"

Say, "Each of your groups of three will be assigned one thing to research and bring back to our next class, which can be used to make a strong case to the Principal." Go to the next slide that reads, "Homework" and go through the bullet points.

***Note to the Teacher:** You may wish to instead write these bullet points on the board depending on what is discussed during class.*

Assign one of the bullet points to each of the groups, repeating them as needed based on the number of students/groups in the class. Once the students have written down what their assignment is, go to the last slide and ask them to copy down the websites that appear there to use in their research.

***Note to the Teacher:** If your school has an electronic communications system for students, be sure to post the PowerPoint there or email students so they can have it to refer back to as they do the homework assignment.*

Answer any questions from the day or about the homework assignment. (6 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

In-class discussion and brainstorming will achieve the first learning objective. The PowerPoint presentation and mascot activity will achieve the second, third and fourth learning objectives. The homework assignment will reinforce all of the content learned in the session, and support achieving the third learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

Assignment is on the last two slides of PowerPoint and involves group projects and research.

This lesson was based on a concept and PowerPoint created by Diana Thu-Thao Rhodes.