

Delivering Human Development & Sexual Health Information to Students - Tips and Resources

General Tips for Teaching Sexual Health

- Acknowledge your own feelings about sexuality. Teaching about sexuality and relationships may cause embarrassment or anxiety for students and teachers. Simply acknowledging these feelings can help make them more manageable.
- Take some time to think in advance about your own personal boundaries.
- Create a positive and relaxed learning environment.
- Approach questions with an open mind and a sensitivity to sexual orientation and lifestyles that may differ from your own.
- Use inclusive language such as “partner”, instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend.” Students may be struggling with their sexual identity. By shifting towards inclusive language, we can create a more supportive environment that respects the gender identities of all people.

Set Ground Rules

It is essential to establish what is and is not appropriate to discuss in the classroom setting. Having boundaries in place can help to reduce inappropriate comments and create a safe environment where students feel free to ask questions.

Ground rules may include:

- No personal questions.
- No one will be forced to participate in a discussion.
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way.
- Correct names for body parts will be used.
- It is okay to disagree with another person's point of view, but every person's opinion/answer should be respected.
- Everything that is confided to a teacher or facilitator will remain confidential with two exceptions: a disclosure of self-injury or suicidal thoughts / attempt, or a disclosure of abuse by a caregiver.

Refer to Ground Rules During Discussions

- If a question is too personal, remind the student of the ground rules and/or refer to a more appropriate source (e.g., school social worker, school public health nurse).
- If you do not know the answer, it is important to acknowledge this and suggest that the question be researched by the students/teacher.
- If a question is too explicit or inappropriate for others in the class, acknowledge the question and attend to it later, in a discreet manner.
- If there is a concern of sexual abuse, follow your school board policy and procedure for reporting immediately.

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Challenge Negative Attitudes

Help students challenge negative attitudes by asking some of these questions to the entire group:

- Does anyone have a different point of view?
- What do you think about that message?
- Summarize and give challenging examples such as, 'So has every person who wears sexy/provocative clothes been sexually assaulted?' or "Have people who have NOT worn sexy/provocative clothes been sexually assaulted?"

Use Distancing Techniques

To avoid embarrassment and protect student's privacy, always de-personalize discussions. Remind students not to use names of people (even referring to themselves) to keep the discussion neutral and avoid potential embarrassment of other students – even if they aren't in the class. Use interactive teaching techniques such as:

- Age-appropriate educational videos
- Role playing
- Case studies
- Information in the form of puzzles or games

Use Reflection Techniques

Help students to reflect by asking questions such as:

- What was it like having this discussion today?
- What did you learn from others who had a different experience or opinion than you?
- What else do you think you need to learn about?

More Tips and Classroom Resources for Human Development and Sexual Health

- **Teachingsexualhealth.ca (Gr. 1-12):** [Instruction methods](#), [responding to student questions](#) and [lesson plans and activities](#) (based on Alberta requirements). Covers all sexual health topics, including consent and assault.
- **PHE Canada:** [Trauma and violence informed teaching: Why it is critically important, how to do it](#)
- **Ontario Health and Physical Education Association (Ophea):** [Duty to report](#)
- **WECHU:** [Exploring Inclusive Practices and Resources for 2SLGBTQI+ Support](#)
- **Sex Information & Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN):** [Educator Guide on Gender-Based Violence Prevention](#). Includes tips for teaching gender-based violence prevention in comprehensive sexual health education.

For additional support and resources, contact your school Public Health Nurse or the Healthy Schools Department at cs@wechu.org or 519-258-2146 ext. 1555