The Birds and the Bees for Everybody

An Introduction to the “Principles for Gender-Inclusive Puberty and Health Education”

Meg Boyko
Executive Director
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Transgender Spectrum Conference
The Teen Pregnancy & Prevention Partnership (TPPP) promotes adolescent sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention by uniting Missouri through advocacy, collaboration, training and public awareness.
Objectives

- Participants at this session will: have a better understanding of the principles for gender-inclusive puberty and health education.

- Participants at this session will: learn specific strategies to be inclusive of all gender identities during trainings and presentations.

- Participants at this session will: identify tools that can be used to address homophobia and transphobia in order to create safe spaces and increase access to health education for LGBTQ youth, including youth of color in Missouri.
State of Inclusive Sex Education

- Most districts fail to provide information relevant to LGBTQ students
- Only 4% of LGBTQ students report being taught positive/relevant information
- LGBTQ students are 5 times more likely to search for sexuality information online
- Only 9 states require inclusive sex education
- Some state policies forbid the discussion of LGBT relevant information
- 4 states have policies that require only negative information on sexual orientation

Source: GLSEN
State of Inclusive Sex Education in Missouri

• Approximately 1 in 10 (14%) were taught positive representations of LGBTQ people, history, or events (“inclusive curriculum”).

• Only 3% reported receiving LGBTQ-inclusive sex education at school.

What is gender inclusive puberty education?

- Discuss with a partner
Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

Provide a Foundation of Gender Literacy

Principle 1
Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

Distinguish patterns from rules

Principle 2
Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

- Emphasize physiology, rather than gender

Principle 3
Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

Describe many pathways to adult bodies

Principle 4
Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

**Describe Many Pathways to Families**

*Principle 5*
Impact of Inclusive Puberty Education and School Climate on Health
Transgender students, K-12, reported high rates of harassment (78%), physical assault (35%), and sexual violence (12%).

90% of transgender students have heard negative remarks about their gender expression in school.

39% reported hearing school staff make similar comments in the past year.

44% of transgender students felt unsafe at school as a result of their gender expression and identity.

30% percent had skipped at least one day of school in the past month due to fear.

Source: Advocates for Youth
All students, regardless of sexual orientation, reported the lowest levels of depression, suicidal feelings, alcohol and marijuana use, and unexcused absences from school when they were

- In a positive school climate and
- Not experiencing homophobic teasing.

How do we start to implement these principles?

- Discuss with a partner
Strategies for Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

**Principle 1: Provide a Foundation of Gender Literacy**

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**The Gender Unicorn**

Design by Laniya Pan and Anna Moore

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**Welcoming Schools**

**Gender Snowperson: Understanding Gender Identity**

**Suggested Grade Level:** 3 – 8  
**Length of Time:** 45 minutes  
**Goals**

- To explore the concepts of gender identity and gender expression with students.
- To help students understand the differences between gender identity, sexual orientation and sex assigned at birth.
- To help students understand that there are many ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither.
- To help students understand that gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and sex assigned at birth are not binaries, but spectrums.
Strategies for Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

- **Principle 2: Distinguish Patterns from Rules**
Strategies for Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

**Principle 3: Emphasize Physiology, Rather than Gender**

During the menstrual cycle, what is released from a girl’s ovaries?

- a. an egg
- b. fallopian tube
- c. a sperm cell
- d. blood and tissue
Strategies for Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

**Principle 4: Describe Many Pathways to Adult Bodies**

From KidsHealth® in the Classroom

Discussion Questions Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. What changes happen during puberty? Why do we have to go through puberty?

2. When does puberty usually start? Does everyone experience puberty in the same way, at the same time?

3. Why are the changes that happen during puberty so hard to talk about? Why is it important to talk about them anyway? Where can you get information about puberty? Which sources are better than others?

4. With all of the changes happening during puberty, you need to take good care of yourself. What are some ways to handle the changes of puberty?
Strategies for Gender-Inclusive Puberty Education

- **Principle 5: Describe Many Pathways to Families**

  The way I would like to show respect for all different families is....
Modifying Lesson Plans

Do your lessons reflect the gender inclusive principles?

1. Provide a Foundation of Gender Literacy?
2. Distinguish Patterns from Rules?
3. Emphasize Physiology Rather than Gender?
4. Describe Many Pathways to Adult Bodies?
5. Describe Many Pathways to Families?
Early Elementary Conversations

SECOND GRADERS

- Names for body parts
- Gender roles
- Similarities and differences among families
- What makes a good friend
- Adults they can talk to
- How to say “No”
- Bullying and teasing
Moving Into Middle School

**FIFTH GRADERS**

- Reproduction and the reproductive system
- Puberty
- Adults they can talk to
- Sexual orientation
- HIV
- Healthy relationships
- Peer pressure
- Bullying, teasing, and harassment
- Sexual harassment and sexual abuse
Are students of all genders receiving comprehensive information?

**Pros of Gendered Classes**

- When boys and girls are in separate classes, they may feel more comfortable asking questions about sex-specific topics, such as menstruation and nocturnal emissions.

- Some parents and educators are more supportive of teaching boys and girls separately.

- Instruction may be differentiated more easily to meet the unique educational needs and learning styles of boys and girls in gender-segregated classes.

- Parents who believe that coed instruction undermines children’s “natural modesty” might feel more comfortable.

**Cons of Gendered Classes**

- Instructing boys and girls separately can perpetuate the aura of stigma and add to the mystery of the topic.

- Boys and girls miss the opportunity to practice communicating with each other about sensitive topics as they will need to if and when they develop intimate relationships in the future.

- Boys and girls miss the opportunity to learn about topics from each other’s perspectives when they don’t discuss topics together.

- Students are less likely to develop empathy for the changes and challenges experienced by the other sex.

- This approach may result in genders receiving an unequal and gender-biased sex education.

- In separated classes, boys and girls may behave in a less mature manner and act out in ways that can perpetuate stereotypical gender roles.

- Some children may feel uncomfortable when assigned to a group or class that doesn’t align with their internal sense or external expression of gender (gender identity or gender expression).

- Separating boys and girls makes it challenging to schedule the instruction and instructors.

From *Puberty: The Wonder Years* at https://pubertycurriculum.com/sex-education-in-elementary-schools-gender-segregated-or-coed/
Responding to Challenging Questions

5-Step Model for Inclusivity

1. Affirm the learner
2. Identify the type of question
   - Reframe the question – Orientation/Gender Neutral
3. Respond to the factual
   - Address LGBTQ relevant content
4. Explore the range of values
5. Refer to a trusted adult for additional information
Inclusive Responses

Rephrase questions to be more orientation and gender neutral/inclusive:

Can a guy get a girl pregnant the first time they have sex?

Can a person get or get someone pregnant the first time they have sex?
Inclusively Answering Questions

**Question:** So can a person get someone pregnant the first time they have sex?

**Affirm:** “This is an important question, I am glad you asked.”

**Identify:** This is a fact based question

**Answer:** “If a person with a uterus, ovaries and eggs has sex that allows sperm to come in contact with an egg, they can get pregnant, even if it is the first time.”
• How difficult are these strategies to implement? What were some of the challenges?

• How do you think an LGBTQ student might feel during a gender inclusive puberty lesson?

• What additional strategies would be helpful in a gender inclusive classroom during puberty lessons?
Resources

For info about your changing body and mind and the kinds of issues that older kids face, this is the place.

- Girls and Puberty
- Boy Stuff
- Boys and Puberty
- For Boys: Trouble “Down There”
- Getting Muscles
- What’s an Adam’s Apple?
- Your Changing Voice

As one of the most fundamental aspects of self, gender impacts everybody. Explore the meanings related to gender for children and teens and learn the impact gender inclusiveness and diversity can have.
Resources

- Gender Spectrum - Resources on Gender-Inclusive Puberty and Health Education
- GLSEN – School Climate Survey
- *Puberty: The Wonder Years* – Gender-Segregated Instruction
- Professional Learning Standards for Sex Educators
- Kids Health – Lesson Plans and Articles
- Amaze – Videos on Sexual Health Topics
- Advocates for Youth – Rights, Respect, Responsibility Curriculum
- ETR – FLASH Curriculum
Contact TPPP

- Our website
  www.teenpregnancy-mo.org

- Meg Boyko, Executive Director
  executivedirector@teenpregnancy-mo.org

- Phone Number
  (314) 884-8275

- Facebook
  www.facebook.com/TPPPMOMO

"Young people have a fundamental right to accurate, unbiased information about their body and sexuality. Sex education changes lives."

LACI GREEN

#NATIONALSEXEDUCATIONDAY