SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY

LEARNER OUTCOMES

Examine aspects of healthy sexuality and responsible sexual behaviour. Examine the definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity. Examine the impact of heterosexism. Develop strategies to deconstruct stereotypes. Identify negative behaviours that reinforce discrimination and heterosexism. Develop behaviours that respect sexual and gender diversity.

MATERIALS:

1. HANDOUT: Role Play Scenarios
2. SLIDE: Role Play Starters
3. SIGNS: Value Statements for Dot Activity
4. PAPER: Blank Sheets
5. STICKERS: Green, Red, Yellow. 12 of each colour for each student

INTRODUCTION:

Sexual minority youth may not make themselves known; but current research indicates that between 2% and 10% of individuals in North American society identify as LGBTQ.

APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)
Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.
B. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (10-15 min)

Students begin to examine homophobia and heterosexism. Before the discussion, ensure that everyone understands that the prefix “homo-“ as used in “homophobia” encompasses anyone who is not heterosexual (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered). LGBTTQ is a commonly used acronym for the constellation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited and queer and/or questioning.

1. What are some words that you think of when you hear the words “sexual orientation or gender identity?”
   - List all words on the board. Use these words to dispel myths as you continue the discussion.

2. Use the following definitions to discuss the list generated by students:

   **Sexual Orientation** A person’s affection and sexual preference.

   **Gay** A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. The word gay can refer to both male and females, but is commonly used to identify males only.

   **Lesbian** A female who is attracted physically and emotionally to other females.

   **Bisexual** A person who is attracted physically and emotionally to both males and females.

   **Transgendered** A person whose gender identity, outward appearance, expression and/or anatomy does not fit into conventional expectations of male or female.

This topic is mentioned under the School Act. Teachers should familiarize themselves with The Guide to Education for information on student exemption.

It is important for teachers to understand the objectives and to be aware of personal biases when discussing sexual orientation. It may be helpful to complete the Your Values.
**Heterosexual** A person who is attracted physically and emotionally to someone of the opposite sex. Also commonly referred to as straight.

**Coming out** Often refers to “coming out of the closet” — the act of disclosing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Questioning** A person who is unsure of their sexual orientation.

**Two-Spirited** Some aboriginal people identify themselves as two spirited rather than bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures, two-spirit persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Before colonization, two-spirit persons were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.

**Heterosexism** The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that this sexual orientation is superior. Heterosexism is often expressed in more subtle forms than homophobia.

**Homophobia** Fear and/or hatred of homosexuality in others, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, or acts of violence.

**Gender Identity** A person’s internal sense of being male or female, which may not be the same as one’s biological sex.

**Gender Variant** Refers to individuals whose expressions of gender do not conform to the dominant gender norms of masculinity and femininity.

**Genderqueer** Used to describe individuals who perceive their gender to be neither that of a male or female but outside the gender binary.

**Transition** The process of changing from one’s
birth sex to one’s self-perceived gender. This process may involve dressing in the manner of the self-perceived gender, changing one’s name to reflect the self-perceived gender, or undergoing hormone therapy and/or sex reassignment surgery change one’s secondary sex characteristics to reflect the self-perceived gender.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery** This is sometimes referred to as a sex change or gender reassignment surgery and is a surgical procedure to change the genitals and secondary sex characteristics from one gender to another.

**Internalized Homophobia** A diminished sense of personal self-worth or esteem felt by an individual as a result of the experienced or presumed homophobia of others.

**Transsexual** A person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned birth gender and undergo treatment (e.g. hormones and/or surgery) to transition genders.

**Ally** A person regardless of sexual orientation, who supports the human, civil, and sexual rights of all people.

3. Where do “homophobia” and “heterosexualism” come from?
   - Fear
   - Differing values
   - Misinformation
   - Media

4. Do “homophobia” and “heterosexualism” exist in our society? How do they exist?
   - Yes, they do.

5. What does “homophobia” and “heterosexualism” look like in this school?
   - Possible examples of homophobia include name-calling, jokes about sexual orientation, and various forms of harassment (including violence).
   - Possible examples of heterosexualism may include heterosexually focused greeting cards, posters on the wall, and promotional material for school functions.

6. What have you heard about some of the experiences of youth who “come out”? What may be someone’s experience if they “came out” in this school?
   - Common negative experiences include feeling different and alone, being rejected by friends, and being a target of discrimination and violence.
   - Positive experiences stem from the improved sense of self-identity experienced by the individual who is able to share such an important aspect of self with supportive friends.

7. What steps can you take to make this a safe, supportive school?
   - Identify and address inappropriate behaviour/ harassment.
   - Speak out for someone else. Encourage others to do so as well.
- Be supportive of others.
- Role model respectful behaviours.
- Take the initiative to talk to someone you think may be under stress.
- Be a friend to anyone who has decided to tell me he or she is LGBTTQ or questioning his/her sexual or gender identity.
- Learn more about the issues.
- Become part of a support group.
- Identify local resources that can provide support.
- Be an ally.

C. DIVERSITY STARTERS (40 min)

Students examine the impact of homophobia and heterosexism and develop behaviours that respect sexual diversity.

1. Form student groups of 3-5 students.
2. Give each group a Role Play Diversity Scenario card.
3. Explain that groups must plan and present their scenario to the class as outlined on the card they received. The presentation must provide answers to the questions outlined on the card. Zero tolerance for inappropriate language.
4. Display the slide: Role Play Starters to give students ideas for lines that may be used in their responses to their scenario. Give groups 10-15 minutes to plan and answer the questions to their scenario.
5. Instruct the audience to listen carefully to each presentation, and inform them that there will be a discussion based on the questions after each presentation.
6. Have each group begin by reading the scenario and scenario questions. If the presentation becomes homophobic or reinforces negativity, the teacher can stop the presentation and lead a more productive discussion using the questions on each scenario card.
7. After each presentation, use the questions from the scenario card to lead a discussion. Have the class identify how their scenario addressed each question and if the question was adequately explored. Have the class brainstorm additional appropriate answers or approaches.
8. Once all presentations are complete, conclude the activity with a discussion based on the following questions:

You can choose to have students answer these questions individually without publicly responding:

- What were your feelings as you heard these scenarios?
- What did you feel toward each of the characters? Why?
- What stereotypes emerged? What kinds of homophobia/heterosexism did you observe?
- What characters do you most identify with and why?
- Which character most shared your feelings and values?
D. VALUES CONTINUUM (20-30 min)

_Students explore their thoughts around sexual diversity. You have the option of choosing a selection if you do not want to use all of the 7 signs._

1. **Post the 7 values signs (Values Statements for Dot Activity) around the room along with a blank piece of paper under each statement.**

The following are the statements written on each sign.

- I would support a friend who decided to tell me he/she was not heterosexual.
- I would laugh at a joke ridiculing homosexuality.
- I would laugh at a joke ridiculing heterosexuality.
- TV shows accurately represent people who are not heterosexual.
- Our school is a safe place for most students, including those who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, or queer.
- There are adults in this school who would be helpful to a student who was not heterosexual.
- I would be comfortable if my teacher/best friend/sibling was gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, or queer.

2. Explain that this exercise is designed to explore personal values. Give the following instructions:
   - Around the room there are a variety of different value statements. Most of the statements are about relationships, dating and sexual behaviour.
   - This activity is to be done in silence and will be strictly confidential. This activity is about your values. It does not matter what you think your friends believe it is about making a decision which can be tough and sometimes a bit uncomfortable. Afterwards, we will have a class discussion.
   - You are each to travel around the room to the different signs and read them individually. Please be respectful of others and provide people with lots of space while they are taking their turn reading the statement.
   - Everyone has some different coloured stickers. You are to place 1 sticker behind each sign. Put a green one if you AGREE with the statement. Red if you DISAGREE and yellow if you are UNSURE.
   - When you have completed reading all of the statements and placing your stickers hand in the rest of your stickers and sit down in your seat.

3. Once the activity has been completed ask students for help in turning over all of the blank sheets of paper. Read the first statement and ask everyone to notice the range of responses. Ask students if anyone would like to comment or share their perspective. Ask students to think to themselves if their parents or friends would agree with the statement.

4. When the first statement has been fully discussed, repeat for the remaining
statements. Pacing is important as you want to get through as many statements while making sure you hear as many points of view participants are willing to share. If time runs out, it is okay not to get to all of the statements. Make sure though that you reserve at least 10 minutes at the end to debrief the activity with the following questions.

5. Debrief with the following discussion questions:
   - How easy was it to vote on these values?
   - Which statements were hardest for you?
   - If your parents voted on these statements, would their votes be similar to, or different from those of the group?

6. Encourage students to think about what they learned about personal values and group values from doing the activity.

7. Remind students of the ground rules and to

**LGBTQ resources and support:**

**OUT IS OK Helpline** 1-877-OUT-IS-OK (688-4765)  
A toll-free, peer and crisis support line operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Youth Safe** [http://www.youthsafe.net/](http://www.youthsafe.net/)  
A guide to Alberta’s resources for LGBTTQ

**Alberta’s Bullying Helpline** 1-888-456-2323

PFLAG Canada supports, educates and provides resources to anyone with questions or concerns.

**QUESTION BOX (10 min)**

Answer questions from last class. Have students fill out questions and address them next class.

**SELF REFLECTION**

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?
What will you change for future use of this lesson?
STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:
- Examine a range of behaviours and choices regarding sexual expression?
- Examine the impact of homophobia and heterosexism?
- Identify negative behaviours that reinforce homophobia and heterosexism?

Skills:
- Develop strategies to deconstruct stereotypes?
- Develop behaviours that respect sexual diversity?

Attitudes:
- Respect diverse points of view and approaches to life?

Role-Play Scenario One

The star of the senior basketball team is “out” outside of school but not in school. She/he decided not to “come out” at school after a friend, last year, came out at school and suffered verbal and physical abuse. She/he has, however, decided to ask for help from people he/she trusts.

Role-play scenarios can include conversations between any combination of the following:

• The student
• Parent or other adult support person
• Teacher/Guidance Counsellor/Principal
• Student leader/friends

Your group must work together to develop a conversation examining the following questions:

• What concerns might this student have about her/his safety?
• What happens when someone listens and offers support to the student?
• What school and community support systems are available to this student?
• What can students and staff do to make this school a safer place?

Role-Play Scenario Two

A teacher is greatly loved by students, staff and parents. The teacher is appreciated for the extra effort she/he has always put into her/his work. Almost everyone at the school knows the teacher is not a heterosexual but it is never discussed. The teacher is promoted and transferred to a new school. The new parents are really pleased with her/his continuing great performance. Three months into the school year a parent in the new community learns that this teacher not heterosexual. Suddenly, there is a small but vocal parent’s group that is writing letters to the administration to have the teacher transferred. Some individuals have made threats and the teacher is feeling frightened.

Role-play scenarios can include conversations between any combination of the following:

• The teacher
• Student/group of students
• Parent
• Principal
• Another teacher/group of teachers

Your group must work together to develop a conversation examining the following questions:

• How secure does the teacher feel in the new environment?
• What would happen to encourage the teacher to stay? To go?
• Who are the people in this teacher’s support system?
• What can students and staff do to make this school a safer place?
Role-Play Scenario Three

A student talks easily about his/her two Moms. Other students call him /her insulting names. They tease him/her incessantly and harass him/her in the hallways. They say mean things about his/her parents and about the student. Things become unbearable for this student.

Role-play scenarios can include conversations between any combination of the following:

- The student
- The student’s friend
- Two “bullies”
- Two bystanders
- A teacher

Your group must work together to develop a conversation examining the following questions:

- What are the safety and diversity issues faced by the student?
- How does the traditional definition of a family affect this student?
- What are the responsibilities of the role play characters to support this student?
- What can students and staff do to make this school a safer place?

Role-Play Scenario Four

A homophobic slur is written on the locker of a student. No one claims responsibility. Everyone in the school sees the locker because it is right beside the office.

Role-play scenarios can include conversations between any combination of the following:

- The student with the locker
- Staff members (teacher/principal/guidance counsellor)
- Passers by
- The students friends
- The offender
- Parents

Your group must work together to develop a conversation examining the following questions:

- How does it affect a student to be called homophobic names?
- Does it matter if the owner of the locker is gay or not? Why?
- What approaches can the individual, the school, and parents take?
- What can students and staff do to make this school a safer place?
Your group may choose to use one or more of the following lines to get started:

- I always knew something was different.
  - Why is this happening to me?
- Wow. That must be really hard for you.
  - Who else knows about this?
- What can you tell me about it?
  - What matters is that you are still secure.
- How did you keep this secret for so long?
  - I have an uncle/sister/friend that is gay
I would support a friend who decided to tell me he/she was not heterosexual.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
I would laugh at a joke ridiculing someone who is gay.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
I would laugh at a joke ridiculing heterosexuality.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
TV shows accurately represent people who are not heterosexual.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
Our school is a safe place for most students, including those who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, or questioning.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
There are adults in this school who would be helpful to a student who was not heterosexual.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker
I would be comfortable if my teacher/best friend/sibling was gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, two-spirited, or questioning.

PLACE ONE STICKER ON THE BACK OF THE PAPER BELOW

Agree = Green Sticker
Disagree = Red Sticker
Unsure = Yellow Sticker