LEARNER OUTCOME¹ W-4.3:

Describe physical, emotional and social changes that occur during puberty; e.g., menstruation, secondary sexual characteristics, changing identity and moods.

MATERIALS:

1. HANDOUT: Three’s Company in the Body
2. HANDOUT: Ask an Adult

INTRODUCTION:

As children enter puberty, they can experience feelings ranging from excitement to dread. We can help students deal with these feelings by helping them to identify the changes that will occur and the tools they have to cope with these changes. We also can encourage students to seek an adult with whom they can communicate about sexuality. Honest, open communication between parents and children through childhood, the pre-teen years, adolescence, and young adulthood can help lay the foundation for people to mature into sexually healthy adults.¹ This lesson helps students establish a comfort level with the topic and begin to examine puberty changes.

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. INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN SEXUALITY

Students begin to think about and discuss the human body.

Have students complete the handout Three’s Company in the Body. Give them a few minutes to work individually, and have them move into progressively larger groups to share what they have learned and to try and complete the entire exercise.

THREE’S COMPANY IN THE BODY ANSWER KEY:

1. Lip 6. Leg  
2. Ear 7. Arm  
3. Eye 8. Rib  
4. Gum 9. Toe  

C. GROUP BRAINSTORM (5 min)

Students work together to develop a list of changes they anticipate will happen during puberty.

1. Write three headings on the board: “Body Changes,” “Thought Changes,” and “Relationship Changes.”
2. Place students in small groups. Have groups choose three recorders, and give each one the responsibility of writing down one of the three headings.
3. Have groups brainstorm the changes that occur as a person grows up. Recorders write down the answers in the appropriate category.

D. NEWSPRINT DISPLAY (5 min)

Students share anticipated puberty changes.

1. Write the following titles on separate pages of newsprint, and post them on the wall:
   - The great things about growing up
   - The difficult things about growing up
2. As a class, come up with an example or two for each heading. An example of a difficult change could be period cramps. A great change could be more independence. Discuss that some changes may fit in both categories. For example, “more responsibility” can be seen as both great (I get to baby-sit!) or difficult (I have to baby-sit.).
3. Have students walk around the room writing remarks under each title. If they are struggling, encourage them to review the list of changes created during the group brainstorm.
E. GROUP DISCUSSION (10 min)
Students begin to “normalize” the changes that will occur.
Discussion Questions/Points:
1. **Are there any changes listed on the two lists, “The Great Things About Growing Up” and “The Difficult Things About Growing Up”, that probably won’t happen to people when they are developing?**
   - For example, students may have listed a change such as “girls are more mature than boys”. This is a myth. Girls generally start puberty sooner than boys but are not necessarily more mature.

2. **Why do we develop?**
   - Puberty happens to everyone.
   - Changing from a child to a teenager is called “PUBERTY.” A teenager is also called an “ADOLESCENT.”

3. **Why are some changes difficult? Great?**
   - People react to change differently. Some changes may be listed as being both great and difficult. Feelings about change are personal.
   - A difficult change (as identified by the students) doesn’t have to be a problem. There are different ways to cope with change, and these are discussed in the next question.

4. **What can we do to make change easier?**
   - Focus on student strengths. Have students brainstorm things they are already good at (i.e., communication, self-advocacy, and independence) that will help them with puberty. Help students identify support systems (i.e., family, school, and community members) who can provide help/support.

If initial groups were separated by gender, it is now important to bring the two groups together. Working in mixed gender groupings helps students develop a deeper understanding of each other’s puberty changes.

Remember puberty is considered a special rite of passage or time in many cultures. For example, in the Jewish community the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is recognized as the “coming of age ceremony” in which boys (bar) and girls (bat) transition into adulthood.
F. ASK AN ADULT (5 min today, 30 min homework, 5 min next class)

Students begin to build a support network to help them cope with puberty.

1. Distribute the handout Ask an Adult for students to complete as a homework assignment.
2. Explain that students can complete this interview with any adult they trust.

Dedicate time to debrief this activity during the next lesson.

QUESTION BOX (10min)

Introduce the question box. You could have students fill out questions every lesson, or have students begin to think about questions that they might ask next lesson.

TAKE IT HOME

Students will complete the handout Ask an Adult.

Keep in mind that all students do not live in a “traditional” family nor do they have equal opportunities for open discussion within their “family.” Although it is best for students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian, it may not be possible. Be sensitive to the needs of your students.

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:

• Identify various changes that occur during puberty?
• Describe ways to cope with change?
• Identify support systems that can help during puberty?

Skills:

• Work together to brainstorm examples of puberty change?
• Exemplify appropriate listening and speaking skills during class discussion?

Attitudes:

• Acknowledge that changes will occur during puberty?
• Accept that change is part of puberty?
• Establish comfort discussing sexuality?

THREE’S COMPANY IN THE BODY

Can you name ten parts of the body that are common to both male and female that are spelled with only three letters?

No slang (e.g., "Bum") or shortened words (e.g., "lid" is a short form of "eyelid") are allowed.

1. _____________________
2. _____________________
3. _____________________
4. _____________________
5. _____________________
6. _____________________
7. _____________________
8. _____________________
9. _____________________
10. _____________________

Clue: Five parts are above the neck and 5 are below.
Puberty can be a challenge. It helps to have a parent or an adult you trust to talk to about your questions or concerns. All adults have gone through the changes of “growing up.” Having your parent or a supportive adult share his or her experience of growing up will help you during your own experience of puberty.

Take this handout home. Share it with a parent or a trusted adult, and ask that person if you can complete it together.

Schedule a time with the adult for the interview. Give the adult this handout so that they can think about the answers before the interview.

Interview the adult using the questions provided. Allow at least a half an hour.

Both you and the adult sign the tear-off slip at the bottom of the page when the interview is complete. This tear-off slip can be handed in to show that you have completed the activity.

PUBERTY QUESTIONS:

1. What was the first sign you noticed that you had started puberty? How old were you?
2. What was the best thing about puberty?
3. What was difficult about puberty?
4. How did you handle the difficult parts of puberty?

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(Tear off and hand in this slip only)

We completed the “Ask an Adult” interview.

________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________
Student Signature  Adult Signature