**Tips for Teaching Sexual Health Education**

Sexual health education is a sensitive topic for both teachers and students. This class topic can bring up a range of feelings such as empowerment, curiosity, confusion, fear, discomfort, or shame. This may be some teacher’s first time teaching sexual health education and it may be some student’s first time learning about this topic. This PDF document will be a supportive tool to help navigate sexual health education discussions in your classroom. As a facilitator of sexual health education in a classroom, it is crucial to set up ground rules before diving into the lessons, discussions, or activities that will be presented to your students. A consistent set of ground rules at the beginning of each topic of sexual health education creates a framework for a safer, respectful, and positive teaching experience for teachers and a learning environment for students.

**Top 5 Ground Rules for Teaching Sexual Health Education to Youth**

1. Use of Language & Appropriate Terminology

Use appropriate language and anatomical terminology in your classroom (Refer to the table below). It is important to be mindful and inclusive of the language used and to understand how heterosexist language impacts all students. Often heterosexuality is assumed and words such as marriage, premarital sex, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, and wife are the dominant narrative. Students whose reality is not being acknowledged will feel unsafe. Instead, use more gender-neutral terms (e.g. partner).

Appropriate Terminology

| Slang or “Teen” Term | Appropriate Classroom Terminology |
| --- | --- |
| Blowjob, head, sucking my cock, hummer, go down | Oral sex. |
| Fingering, whacking me off, jerking off, flicking the bean | Masturbation (alone or mutual), digital sex, hand sex, manual sex |
| Cum, jizz, squirting, cleaning the pipes, eating out, carpet munching | Ejaculation, orgasm |
| Hooking up | Engaging in some form of sexual activity |
| F\*\*cking, Smashing, clapping cheeks, bumping uglies, doing the dirty | Intercourse, penetration |
| Thirsty, horny | Sexually aroused |
| Sneaky link, friends with benefits | A sexual partner |
| Situationship | A romantic or sexual relationship that is not formally defined or labeled |

1. Address the sensitivity of these topics

Give a disclaimer at the beginning of class to address the uncomfortable feelings that can come up when discussing sex and that it is normal if it feels challenging. At times this discomfort can translate into laughter in the classroom. Particular topics may be more sensitive and cause incessant chatter such as:

* Abortion
* Alternative lifestyles/ Relationship styles (e.g., open relationships, polyamory, etc.)
* Bestiality
* BDSM/ Fetish
* Masturbation
* Sex toys
* Sexual assault/ coercion
* Sexual orientation
* Transgender

1. Promote Respect & Safety

It is essential for students to feel respected and safe during sexual health education lessons, discussions, and activities. Ask students to raise their hands before speaking and listen without interrupting when their classmates speak. Remind the class that everyone has different lived experiences, identities, and attractions and that all questions are good questions. No laughing, making fun of, or negative behavior towards classmates will be tolerated in the classroom.

1. Privacy & Confidentiality

Students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions. However, it is important to let them know at the beginning of class that they are not allowed to discuss personal issues or tell stories of people in the class or of people they know. What is shared in the group stays in the group.

1. Saying you don’t know

Sexual health is a layered subject and it is normal not to have the answers to all the questions. Admit when you don’t know the answer to a question. A back pocket line you can use is “That is a great question, thank you. I don’t know. I will look into that and get back to you”. Don’t forget to come back to your students with the correct answer and appropriate resources. It’s also important to thank them for their questions

The Anonymous Question/Feedback Box

Creating an anonymous question/feedback box allows students to express their concerns, feelings, and questions. Ensure there is some form of privacy when submitting anything to the box. Answer all questions from the box during the following lesson.

Your role as an educator is to help students understand **THEIR** values concerning sexual issues and their choices. It is not your job to impose your values about what is right and wrong when it comes to sexual health issues, unless, they are hurting themselves, hurting someone else, or it is against the law.

Our values have been growing since childhood but they are not fixed. They are influenced by our religion, ethnicity, culture, family, friends, gender, sexual orientation, neurology, psychological makeup, and life experience. Our values grow and are molded by our perceptions and life histories. It is important to have an attitude reassessment for teachers who will be teaching sexual health education