

Activity

1. Explain that you are beginning a unit on "sexuality."

That the word is probably new to some students, so you'll define it. Go on to explain that some people think "sex" and "sexuality" are the same, but that they aren't. "Sex" is the smaller word and the narrower concept. It is sometimes used to mean gender (e.g. on forms where it asks your name, birth date and sex) and it is sometimes used to mean particular behaviors... "Sexuality" includes those ideas, but it also includes how a person feels about him or herself, what they feel about being male or female, whether they know how to love, how to trust, how to communicate. A person's sexuality has to do with whether they can make friends, whether they can keep friends. And when people study sexuality they also learn about how people change from children into adults, how babies are made, how they're born, and how they grow.

2. Explain the purpose of the unit.

Tell them you are doing this unit so that they will have correct information about things like bodies and growth; so that they will feel good about growing up; so that they'll feel more comfortable asking questions of their parents or doctors; so that they'll understand and appreciate themselves, their families and one another; and so that they will not be as likely to ever be sexually abused.

3. Tell the class that you want to share a Case Study with them, and get their reactions to it.

Read aloud:

"The class was beginning a unit on 'sexuality' that day. They came in from recess and Mr. Clark asked everybody to calm down and get ready to work. But everybody was a little nervous and excited, and it took a long time before the jokes and laughter let up. When it was quiet, Mr. Clark asked whether anyone knew what kinds of things they'd be studying in this next unit called 'sexuality.' Marco raised his hand and asked, 'What about the reproductive system?' A few people giggled. Then Shawna raised her hand. She asked whether the class would learn about menstrual periods. Four or five people began to roar with laughter and Michelle said 'How dumb!' Shawna started to blush. When the laughter kept up, tears came to her eyes and she finally got up and left the room."

Open a discussion about the Case Study. Some questions for the class to consider are:

"Why do you think some people laughed?"

"How did Shawna feel?"

"Do you think other people will raise their hands from now on? Why not? How will they feel about speaking in class?"

"If you were the teacher how would you handle the problem?"

"How could the problem have been avoided in the first place?"

"Do you think this kind of thing could happen in OUR class?"

"How can we keep it from happening here? Why don't we develop a contract for how we'll treat each other during this unit?"