Lesson 7: Privilege, Oppression, & Being an Ally

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to define privilege, oppression, and ally.
2. Students will explore the effects of oppression on a person and community.
3. Students will understand how to be an ally to all people including LGBTQIQ people.
4. Students will develop empathy for others.

AGENDA

10 minutes Do Now
15 minutes Do You Agree or Disagree
15 minutes Privilege: Different Treatment for Different People
10 minutes Being an Ally
OPTIONAL
20 minutes Ways to Make a Difference
Homework My Values Mini-Essay

MATERIALS

- Vocabulary Reference List
- Agree/Disagree/Pass signs
- Handout: Different Treatment for Different People
- Handout: SFUSD Student Rights
- Worksheet: You are an Ally if...
- Homework: My Values Mini-Essays
  OPTIONAL
- Worksheet: Ways to Make a Difference

CALIFORNIA HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS

1.10.G Recognize that there are individual differences in growth, development, physical appearance, gender roles, and sexual orientation.
2.5.G Evaluate how culture, media, and other people influence perceptions about body image, gender roles, sexuality, attractiveness, relationships, and sexual orientation.
5.5.G Use a decision-making process to analyze the benefits of respecting individual differences in growth and development, physical appearance, gender roles, and sexual orientation.
DO NOW 10 minutes

Materials
- Every student needs a notebook, journal, or paper and a pen
- Flipchart or whiteboard and markers

Activity
Write on board and have students complete the following question:
When was a time you were treated “special” just for being you?

Have a few students share their answers. Remind students that there is no right or wrong answer. Point out to students that some of this “special treatment” could be because of a privilege that they have – whether they are aware of this privilege or not.

Teacher Tip:
Encourage students to think about a time that their age, race, ethnicity, spoken language, sexual orientation, gender, ability, or documentation status influenced how they were treated.

DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE 15 minutes

Materials
- Agree, Disagree, and Pass signs

Activity
Post the “Agree” sign on one side of the room, the “Disagree” sign on the other side of the room, and the “Pass” sign in the middle of the room. Instruct students that you are going to read some statements and that you want them to decide if they agree or disagree with each one. After they have made their choice, the students will quietly walk to one side of the room if they agree, the other side if they disagree. Explain to students that they may not 100% agree or disagree with a statement, but for the purpose of this activity it is helpful if they chose one of the other. Remind students that they always have the right to pass and that is why there is a “pass” sign so that if a student needs to not answer a statement, the student can stand near the pass sign.

Teacher Tip:
If students have limited mobility or there is limited space in the classroom, this activity can also be done by instructing the students to show a thumbs up for agree and a thumbs down for disagree. If they are unsure or want to pass, they can do a sideways thumb signal.
Lesson 7: Privilege, Oppression, and Being an Ally

Activity guidelines:

- We all have the right to stand up for what we believe in. Please be assertive. You might not completely agree or completely disagree with every statement, however, please try to go to one side of the other.
- If for some reason you cannot take a stand on what you really believe, please examine why you chose to stand where you did.
- Any views expressed are not to be labeled as “right or wrong” by anyone participating.
- Use “I” statements and do not use put-downs

Chose from the following statements for the agree/disagree activity:

1. An openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person could be president in our lifetime.
2. I would be comfortable having a friend who is bisexual, transgender, lesbian, or gay.
3. Homosexuality is a genetic or inherent trait (meaning people are born gay or lesbian).
4. I think that in certain settings, and among friends, it’s okay to tell gay jokes or jokes about gay people.
5. I think that in certain settings, and among friends, it’s okay to tell gay jokes or jokes about transgender people.
6. I think that if a teacher is gay, they should come out (let people know they are gay).
7. A student who verbally bashes a student at school by calling them “fag,” “dyke” or “queer” should be suspended.
8. I think schools should teach more about LGBT people.
9. If someone is bisexual then that person should just choose to be with a person of the opposite gender.
10. If someone is transgender then that person could also be straight, lesbian, bisexual, or gay.
11. If someone hasn’t had a sexual experience with someone of the same gender, then that person can’t really consider themselves gay or lesbian. (Can there be such a thing as a homosexual virgin?)
12. If someone has had same-sex sexual experience then that person must be gay or lesbian.
13. My culture has strong expectations about gender.
14. My family has strong expectations about gender.
15. It’s harder to be a girl than to be a guy.
16. It’s harder to be a guy than to be a girl.
17. Someone’s race can influence how that person acts as man or woman.
18. At some point in my life, I have been told to change something about myself in order to be the right kind of girl or boy.
19. At this school, if you don’t fit in the typical gender boxes, it’s OK.
20. At this school, if you’re gay, think you might be gay, or are perceived to be gay - it’s OK.

Be Real. Be Ready.
After the activity, debrief the activity with the class. Possible debrief questions are:

- Was it easy or difficult to determine your responses?
- How did it feel to stand with the majority? With the minority?
- Did anything surprise you in this activity? If so, what?

**Teacher Tip:**
If your class is a bit quiet, you can ask students to pair up and share their answers.

**PRIVILEGE: DIFFERENT TREATMENT FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE**

**Materials**
- Worksheet: Different Treatment for Different People

**Activity**
Pass out the handout "Different Treatment for Different People." Let students know that in this activity the concept of privilege will be discussed.

**Suggested Script:**
Privilege is something that many people don’t think about and often aren’t even aware of. It describes all of the benefits which a dominant group (the group “with power”) automatically receives in our society. This could be simply because of something like the color of their skin, their race, their ethnicity, how much money they have, where they live, their ability levels, their documentation status, the language they speak, and much more.

We already discussed how many of us believe that men tend to have more power and privilege than women. This inequality can also exist in other groups. We will now discuss how some people are treated better or worse, they have more or less privilege, based on their sexual orientation (who they are attracted to) or based on their gender expression (how they dress, look, behave, and act based on their gender).

Read through the examples in the first section: Treatment based on sexual orientation. Remind students of the definition for heterosexual: A word to describe someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of another gender. It can be used instead of the word straight.

After reading through all of the examples in the first section, ask the students:

- Can you think of any other examples of how heterosexual students are treated differently, or have more privilege, than lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer students?
- What other ideas would you add to this part of the handout?

Read through the examples in the second section: Treatment based on gender expression. Remind students of the definition for gender expression: The way a person presents (shows) and communicates their gender identity through actions, dress, behaviors, and speech (examples: feminine, androgynous, masculine). Remind students of the definition for cisgender: A person whose gender identity is aligned with the social expectations for the physical body they were born with (examples: a male bodied person who looks and acts “like a man,” or a female bodied person who looks and acts “like a woman.”)
After reading through all of the examples in the second section, ask the students:

- Can you think of any other examples of how cisgender students are treated differently, or have more privilege, than androgynous, gender queer or transgender students?
- What other ideas would you add to this part of the handout?
- How might cisgender privilege make someone feel who is cisgender? Transgender? Gender non-conforming or androgynous (presents neither typically male nor female)?

Close this activity by reminding students that privilege is not something people earn through hard work or skills. Let students know that they can change how people are treated by treating everyone with respect, by understanding the privilege they may have in a situation, and by being an ally to those with less privilege.

**Suggested Script:**
Privilege is not something a person earns through skills or hard work; it describes what our society automatically gives or denies people because of their identity. There are many kinds of privilege including racial privilege, gender privilege, and class privilege although each kind of privilege has a slightly different list. Even though this may seem like it is difficult to change, we can each make choices to ensure that people are treated with respect. We can make sure to be aware of the privilege we have and understand when we are treating someone differently because of their identity or situation. We can all be allies to people with less or different privileges than we have.

**BEING AN ALLY**  
10 minutes

**Materials**
- Worksheet: You are an Ally If...
- Handout: LGBT Student Rights

**Activity**
Let students know that you will be talking about how to be an ally.

**Suggested Script:**
When some people who have privilege first learn about what privilege is they may feel guilty for having access to rights and benefits which others do not have. Rather than feeling guilty for having the rights which everyone deserves, it is healthier to learn how to be an ally to people with less power and privilege. Through being allies, people can help to change our society so that all people have access to these privileges. Here are some ways which you can be an ally to all people. Remember that even if you are part of a group that traditionally has less power or privilege, you can still be an ally.

Pass out the "You are an Ally if..." worksheet and have students read out each statement on the sheet. Ask the class to follow along and check the statements that apply to them. After you have completed the sheet, ask students if they would be willing to share one of the statements that they checked and share why they checked that statement. Solicit answers from a few students.

Ask students if there are other things they do to be an ally to LGBTQIQ people. Write these ideas on the board and have students write these ideas on their worksheets.

*Be Real. Be Ready.*
Pass out the LGBT Student Rights handout. Let students know that there are laws and policies to protect students in California against discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Teacher Tip:**
If the LGBT Students Rights sheet is not already posted in your classroom, you can post it during this lesson to show that you and your school are allies to LGBTQIQ students.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE 20 minutes

**Materials**
- Whiteboard or flipchart and markers
- Worksheet: Ways to Make a Difference

**Activity**
In this activity students will think of ways to make a difference with their friends and family, school, and community.

Draw this image on the board:

![Diagram of circles representing different levels: self, family & friends, school, community]

Let students know that they have the power to cause changes at many different levels: within themselves, their family and friends, their school, and their community. Tell students that all of these changes affect the other circles and they all go together. To make a difference, changes need to happen at all levels.

**Suggested Script:**
Change can happen at all levels – from the personal or “self” level to the larger community level. Many people think that small actions don’t make a difference – but they can and they do. In order for change to really happen, we need to look at issues and solutions in all areas of the circles of change.

Have students break into 6 groups. Give each group a Ways to Make a Difference worksheet and assign one topic area (Friends & Family, School, and Community) to each group. Give the groups 10 minutes to work on the assignment. After 10 minutes, have the small groups report back to the whole class. Record the answers on the board.

**HOMEWORK**

*My Values Mini-Essays*

*Be Real. Be Ready.*
Lesson 7: Vocabulary

1. **Ableism**: Prejudice based on the ability of a person’s body and/or mind. This belief system leads to someone prejudging, discriminating against or harming a person they think may have a disability.

2. **Ally**: A person who works with people of an oppressed group to end oppression. Anyone can be an ally.

3. **Classism**: Prejudice based on social class (how much money a person has). This belief leads to someone prejudging or discriminating against a person they think may be from a lower class than their own.

4. **Culture**: A way of life for a person or group of people based on ways of thinking, acting, and material objects. These ways include pictures, music, language, values, and beliefs.

5. **Discrimination**: Denying privileges or rights to a person(s) based on someone’s identity or perceived identity.

6. **Heterosexism**: Prejudice based on sexual orientation (other than heterosexuality). It is the belief that heterosexuality is superior, or that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual.

7. **Homophobia**: Prejudice based on someone’s perceived sexual orientation. This belief system leads to someone prejudging, discriminating against, or harming a person because they believe this person to be homosexual.

8. **Oppression**: When a set of rules, system, or society is built with the goal of benefiting a group of people as a result of the unjust treatment of other groups. This causes inequality.

9. **Prejudice**: A belief system, usually negative, that leads someone to make assumptions about another person or group of people.

10. **Privilege**: The advantages and power that someone has as the result of inequality in a society. People can have privilege because of their gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, class, disability status, etc.

11. **Racism**: Prejudice based on race. This belief system leads to someone prejudging, discriminating against, or harming a person because they perceive this person as not white.

12. **Sexism**: Prejudice based on sex. This belief system leads to someone prejudging, discriminating against, or harming a person because they perceive this person to not be “a real man.”

13. **Transphobia**: Prejudice based on gender identity. This belief system leads to someone prejudging, discriminating against, or harming a person because they perceive this person to not be cisgender.
Handout: Different Treatment for Different People

Name:_____________________________________________  __________________
Period:______________________   Date:_____________________

Treatment Based on Sexual Orientation
Some people are treated differently based on their sexual orientation. People who are heterosexual tend to receive certain privileges that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer, do not. This is called heterosexual privilege. Here is a list of some privileges that heterosexual people may have that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people do not:

- You are able to date who you want to without fear of harassment.
- You are able to go to school functions and dances with your partner (example: prom).
- You can show affection (hold hands, kiss, hug) your partner in public without fear.
- You have role models who have the same sexual orientation as you do.
- You do not have to worry about introducing your partner to your friends or family community just because of their gender.
- You do not have to “come out” and declare your sexual orientation.

What other privileges can you think of?

Treatment Based on Gender Identity and Expression
Some people are treated differently based on their gender identity and expression. People who are cisgender tend to receive certain privileges that people who are transgender, gender queer, gender fluid, or androgynous do not. This is called cisgender privilege. Here is a list of some privileges that cisgender people may have that transgender, gender queer, gender fluid, or androgynous do not:

- Use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical violence, or arrest.
- The ability to flirt with people or form a relationship with someone and not fear that your biological sex may be cause for rejection.
- There are accurate depictions of your gender in television and in movies.
- The ability to purchase clothes that match your gender identity without being refused service or being teased by the staff.
- Forms (such as medical forms, school forms, sports registration forms) list your gender as an option.

What other privileges can you think of?

Be Real. Be Ready.
Worksheet: You are an Ally If...

Name: __________________________________________________________________________
Period: __________________________ Date: __________________

Directions: Read the following statements and check the box next to the statements that apply to you.

☐ You emotionally and verbally support another person who is not part of the dominant group or culture.

☐ You use your voice to help people with less power.

☐ You refrain from stereotyping others based on gender, race, age, physical traits, ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

☐ You like and value diversity in your school and community.

☐ You acknowledge the presence of students and school staff who are different than you and are willing to engage them in genuine conversation.

☐ You are willing to confront verbal and physical harassment at your school.

☐ You maintain confidentiality if a friend or classmate confides in you, unless that person is in danger of harming themselves or another.

☐ You care about the safety of all people around you and create an atmosphere of safety.

☐ You believe in equality and dignity of all people – including those who are different from you.

☐ You seek to understand the experiences of other people.

☐ You are willing to grow and learn how to be a better ally. And you understand that any and all efforts you make to end oppression and discrimination, and to promote equality and dignity are an important and necessary part of making your school, community, and world a safer and more welcoming place for everyone.

What other things can you do to be an ally?
**LGBTQ STUDENT RIGHTS**

**SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

- Right to be treated equally and to be free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (SFUSD Board Policy 5162; California Education Code Section 200-220)

- Right to be respected and to dress and act in ways that do not conform to stereotypes associated with their gender, with respect to the student dress code (SFUSD Board Regulation R5163a; California Education Code Section 221.5)

- Right to LGBTQ-inclusive social studies, history and comprehensive sexual health education (California Education Code Section 51204.5, and 51930-51939)

- Right to be referred to by the gender pronoun and name that fits your gender identity (SFUSD Board Regulation R5163a; California Education Code Section 221.5)

- Right to be involved in school activities, and access spaces such as locker rooms and restrooms, that fit with your gender identity (SFUSD Board Regulation R5163a; California Education Code Section 221.5)

- Right to speak out about LGBTQ issues, including wearing LGBTQ-affirming t-shirts, stickers and bracelets, and access information about LGBTQ issues on school computers, and to bring same gender dates to prom (California Education Code Sections 48907&48950)

- Right to be "out" and be yourself at school, and give permission to school staff of when and to whom they can share your LGBTQ identity

- Right to form and organize Gay-Straight Alliance, or similarly LGBTQ-related student clubs (Federal Equal Access Act; California Education Code Section 220)

- Right to consent to sensitive LGBTQ or sexual health-related services without permission from your parent/guardian or primary caregiver, if you are age 12 or older (California Health and Safety Code 124260; SB 543; California Family Code 6924)

*IF YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS HELP RESPECTING THESE RIGHTS OR TREATING ALL STUDENTS EQUALLY, PLEASE CONTACT KIKI WILLIAMS, SFUSD’S DIRECTOR OF EQUITY, AT WILLIAMSK3@SFUSD.EDU OR (415)-355-7334*

Adapted from the LGBT Students Know Your Rights Guide (ACLU, 2013)

*Always report threats, slurs and bullying to a trusted teacher or adult at our school or on the Safe School Line: (415) 241-2141 SAFESCHOOL@SFUSD.EDU*

*Be Real. Be Ready.*
Homework: My Values Mini-Essay

Name: _____________________________________________
Period: ______________________ Date: ________________

Directions: Answer each of the questions with at least one paragraph. Please use classroom-appropriate language, and be thoughtful and respectful in your answers.

1. Imagine your good friend told you they were gay, lesbian, or transgender. How would you feel? What would you say or do? Why?

2. What are some things that you can do to be an ally to other students in your school?

3. What changes would you like to see at your school to make it a safer and more welcoming environment? How can you help make these changes happen?

4. Do you think that in 20 years people will still be treated differently based on their sexual orientation? Why or why not?

5. Do you think that in 20 years people will still be treated differently based on their gender and gender expression? Why or why not?

Be Real. Be Ready.
# Worksheet: Ways to Make a Difference

**Names:** ____________________________________________________________

**Period:** ___________________ **Date:** ___________________________

**Directions:** As a group, discuss what ways someone could get involved and/or make a change as an ally. Consider the ways in which gender, culture, and sexuality issues play out at this level. How can these things be changed?

**Level:** ________________________________

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