

Making Sense of Puberty

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:

PD.5.AI.1 - Identify credible sources of information about puberty and personal hygiene.

PD.5.AI.2 - Identify trusted adults, including parents, caregivers, and health care professionals, whom students can ask questions about puberty and adolescent health.

PD.5.GS.1 - Make a plan for maintaining personal hygiene during puberty.

TARGET GRADE: Grade 4 Lesson 1

TIME: 40 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Titled newsprint sheets as described
- Teacher's Guide: "Changes of Puberty" – one copy
- Answer Key: "Changes of Puberty" – one per student (to be distributed at the end of class)
- Worksheet: "What's My Plan? Physical Changes of Puberty" – one per student
- Homework: "What's My Plan? Social and Emotional Changes of Puberty" – one per student
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students do not have their own
- "Changes of Puberty" – one copy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe at least three changes that take place during puberty. [Knowledge]
2. Differentiate between what could be considered physical, and what are social and emotional changes of puberty. [Knowledge, Skill]
3. Create a plan for maintaining personal hygiene during puberty. [Knowledge, Skill]

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

If you don't have a white board at the front of the room, take three sheets of newsprint paper. On the top of the first write, "Physical," on the top of the second write, "Social" and "Emotional." Post these at the front of the room with another blank sheet over each to hide what is written there.

Have approximately 30 one-inch pieces of masking tape pre-torn and partially stuck to the board or a desk at the front of the room to save time during the "Changes of Puberty" activity.

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1:

Tell the class that you are going to be talking about puberty today. Say, "Puberty is something everyone goes through starting at around your age and over their teen years. It has to do with all the ways our bodies change to prepare us for becoming adults. This includes how we change emotionally – and socially – as well as physically."

Reveal the three flipchart sheets and say, "Most people know something about the physical changes of puberty – what our bodies go through. But there are also emotional changes – ways in which we change that have to do with our feelings. And there are also social changes – ways in which we change based on the people we spend the most time with. We are going to do an activity now that looks at these changes."

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Divide the group into pairs. Once they are in their pairs, say, “I am going to give each pair two sheets of paper. On each sheet of paper you will see one of the changes of puberty. Please decide whether each one is a physical change, or an emotional or social change of puberty. Once you have decided, bring your sheets up to the front of the room, take a piece of tape, and stick it on the sheet you’ve decided they go on.”

Answer any questions, and then distribute two slips from Changes of Puberty to each pair. Tell them they have 5 minutes in which to decide and bring their sheets up to the front of the room and place them on the correct list.

(7 minutes)

NOTE TO THE TEACHER: *If you have a larger class, you may wish to break the students into groups of 3 as needed. As you distribute the sheets, try to mix them up, when you can, so that the pairs/groups receive sheets that go on different lists.*

STEP 2:

Ask for student volunteers to take turns reading each sheet aloud. Once all the sheets have been read, ask the students whether they think they are all in the correct column, or whether any need to be moved. Move as needed. Then ask students whether they have questions about what any of the changes mean.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER: *As you go through the information with the students, emphasize whenever possible that the changes you are discussing are all normal, but some people go through them sooner than others and this is also normal.*

(12 minutes)

STEP 3:

Say something like, “Most of the changes we go through during puberty are physical. So it can be a really good idea to figure out how you can manage these changes. I’m going to come around with a worksheet where you get to decide what you’re going to do.” Distribute the worksheet, and answer any questions. Tell students they will have about 5 – 7 minutes to complete it. Also let them know they will be sharing their responses with at least one other student in the room, and so they should write down something they are comfortable with another person reading or hearing.

(7 minutes)

STEP 4:

Once 5 – 7 minutes have elapsed, or most students seem finished, call attention to the front of the room. Ask students to get back into their pairs. Instruct them to share the answers they wrote down and talk about any ideas the other person came up with that they have questions about.

(5 minutes)

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STEP 5:

After about 5 minutes, call attention to the front of the room. Tell the class you're going to ask them some questions about their conversations, but that no one should share personal information about their partner with the class – that's up to each person to share if they wish.

Ask: "What was it like to have those conversations with another student? What was [insert student responses] about it?"

"Did you notice you had more ideas in common or were most of your answers different from each other?"

"Would anyone like to share whether they had a tough time coming up with a plan for any of the items?" If any students choose to respond, ask for ideas from the rest of the class.

(7 minutes)

STEP 6:

Distribute the answer key with the physical, social and emotional changes of puberty. Then pass out and explain their homework, telling students that it is due the next class.

(2 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Steps 1 and 2 are designed to achieve the first two learning objectives, while steps 3 through 5 and the homework are designed to achieve learning objective 3.

HOMEWORK:

Students will create a plan in the same format as the one they did in class for how they will manage social/emotional changes during puberty.

Get taller

Grow breasts

Weight gain

**Grow hair under
arms, on legs,
around genitals**

Get acne

**Hair texture
may change**

**Hormones
are raging**

**Voice
deepens**

Spontaneous erections

Menstruation

Wet dreams

Hips widen

Voice cracks

Muscle growth

**Sweat starts
to smell**

**May want to
try more and
riskier things**

**More interested
in being
with friends**

**May have
more conflict
with parents**

**Start to become
interested in
others as more
than friends/
finding partners**

**Peer pressure
increases**

**Mood swings –
feel great one
minute, and then
really sad or
angry the next**

Anxiety and stress

Intense feelings

**Feel
self-conscious
about how your
body looks**

**Might have hard
time making up
your mind/feel
unsure a lot**

**Feel “paranoid”
– everyone’s
looking at/
talking
about you**

**Might start
thinking,
“Who Am I?”
– try to define
yourself as
a person**

Changes of Puberty

Answer Key

PHYSICAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

- Get taller
- Grow breasts
- Weight gain
- Grow hair under arms, on legs, around genitals
- Get acne
- Hair texture may change
- Hormones are raging
- Voice deepens
- Spontaneous erections
- Menstruation
- Wet dreams
- Hips widen
- Voice cracks
- Muscle growth
- Sweat starts to smell

SOCIAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

- May want to try more and riskier things
- More interested in being with friends
- May have more conflict with parents/caregivers
- Start to become interested in others as more than friends/finding a partner
- Peer pressure increases

EMOTIONAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

- Mood swings – you feel great one minute, and then really sad or angry the next
- Anxiety and stress
- Intense feelings
- Feel self-conscious about how your body looks
- Might have hard time making up your mind/feel unsure a lot
- Feel “paranoid” – everyone’s looking at/talking about you
- Might start thinking, “Who Am I?” – try to define yourself as a person

Changes of Puberty

Teacher's Guide

PHYSICAL

Get taller

- Everyone goes through puberty at different rates. This is totally normal.
- How tall you will be is determined a lot by genes – or whether your biological family members were tall or short or somewhere in between.

Grow breasts

- It is normal for one breast to be slightly larger than the other
- If you have ovaries and a uterus, you're most likely to develop breasts. If you have a penis and testicles, however, you may temporarily develop breasts during puberty. This is called "gynecomastia," and it can be very embarrassing and sensitive when it happens. A lot of teasing and bullying can take place, which is completely inappropriate and wrong. Gynecomastia usually goes away by itself.

Weight gain

- All young people gain weight during puberty. Sometimes this is due to physical growth; sometimes this is due to an increase in fat on the body. Both are completely normal.
- Many young people try to diet to lose weight during this time – and while it's always important to eat healthy food and exercise, a lot of the weight gain during puberty is temporary and evens itself out if you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Grow hair under arms, on legs, around genitals

- For people with darker hair, this hair growth may be more apparent.
- Some people choose to shave this hair, whether it's on the face, legs, under the arms or elsewhere. There is no medical reason to shave, it is only about personal preference. If shaving anywhere near your genitals, it's really important to be extra careful.

Get acne

- During puberty, your body starts producing more oil. The oil and dirt that gets trapped in the pores can lead to pimples or more widespread acne.
- Pimples can appear on the face or other parts of the body, like the back or shoulders.

Hair texture may change

- Not everyone experiences a change in hair quality during puberty, but many people do.
- Previously straight hair will sometimes become curlier or coarser; lighter hair may darken.

Hormones are raging

- Hormones are the natural chemicals found in our bodies. We all have them, whether we are kids or adults.
- Hormones are responsible for all of the physical changes in puberty (as well as some of the emotional ones). During puberty, they're present at really high levels – but they even out a bit once puberty is done.

Voice deepens

- This is more pronounced in boys. But kids of all genders may experience a deepening of their voice during puberty.

Spontaneous erections

- When penises stand up by themselves it's called an "erection." This has been happening since infancy and is totally normal. But during puberty and beyond, it can happen more often and can be more noticeable. Also, the erections can last longer.
- During puberty, erections can happen out of nowhere, or spontaneously. They don't even have to be thinking about or looking at anything in particular. While this can be embarrassing they also tend to go away on their own after a short period.

Voice cracks

- Sometimes, kids' voices will deepen dramatically, going from higher to lower. Other times, there will be a transition between the two where the voice cracks. This can sound funny, but it usually makes the person feel self-conscious. The cracking is temporary, and the voice will be lower at the other end of it!

Menstruation

- One of the most dramatic changes a body with ovaries goes through is menstruating or getting a period. This is part of the normal monthly cycle where the body is preparing for a possible pregnancy by building up a lining of blood and tissue in the uterus.
- Once a month, one of the ovaries releases an ovum or egg. This is a tiny egg, it's not like a chicken egg! This means the body is preparing for a possible pregnancy. If sperm gets inside the vagina and swims up into the uterus and fallopian tube after the egg is released, that egg and sperm could meet. If that sperm-filled egg then attaches itself to the wall of the uterus, a pregnancy begins. If that doesn't happen, the lining in the uterus is no longer needed, so it and the tiny egg leave the body during menstruation. This lasts about 5 to 7 days. We will talk about this more in another class.

Wet dreams

- During puberty, testicles start producing sperm, which as you just heard can cause a pregnancy if it meets an egg in the uterus. Sperm come out of the penis inside a fluid called "semen." It's normal for this semen to come out sometimes while sleeping. This is called a "nocturnal emission" or a "wet dream."
- This is different from wetting the bed, and is perfectly normal. Wet dreams happen less and less frequently with age.

Hips widen

- This can range from subtle to more pronounced. Both are completely normal!

Acne

- Young people of all genders experience this at some point.
- Usually, this is an occasional zit here and there; sometimes it can be more serious. If you get a lot of acne, talk with a parent or caregiver about seeing a dermatologist (skin doctor).

Muscle growth

- All bodies and muscles develop during puberty. Everyone is different, and so some people may be more or less muscular.

Sweat starts to smell

- Puberty is when we tend to see a big increase in how frequently kids shower or take baths. This is also when a lot of young people start using deodorant.

WHAT'S MY PLAN? PHYSICAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

Student Worksheet

Name: _____

Directions: For each physical change of puberty listed below, write down one or two ways you think you can try managing it. If something doesn't apply to you/your body, write down what you think another person can do. You'll be sharing this with one other student, so be sure you write down things you are okay with another person knowing!

WHEN THIS HAPPENS...	I CAN TRY...
...I GET ACNE	
...MY SWEAT STARTS TO SMELL	
...I GET SPONTANEOUS ERECTIONS IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE	
...I GET MY PERIOD	
...I HAVE A WET DREAM	
...MY HAIR GETS OILY	
...MY ARMS AND LEGS FEEL SORE AS THEY GROW	

What's My Plan? Social and Emotional Changes of Puberty

Homework

Name: _____

Directions: For each social or emotional change of puberty listed below, write down one or two ways you think you can try managing it.

WHEN THIS HAPPENS...	I CAN TRY...
...I FEEL INSECURE BECAUSE OTHER KIDS ARE CHANGING BEFORE I AM	
...I HAVE MOOD SWINGS (FEELING HAPPY ONE MINUTE AND REALLY UPSET THE NEXT)	
...I FEEL REALLY ANXIOUS	
...I FEEL LIKE I CAN'T SAY NO WHEN A FRIEND PRESSURES ME TO DO SOMETHING I DON'T WANT TO DO	
...I START TO LIKE SOMEONE AS MORE THAN A FRIEND	
...I LIKE SOMEONE AS MORE THAN A FRIEND, BUT THEY DON'T LIKE ME BACK	

If I have additional questions about puberty, I can ask these adults I trust:

1)

2)