

## **A how-to guide for educators**

### **Avoiding homophobia and transphobia in sexual health education**

1. When we teach sexual health, it is important to create a safe environment in our classrooms. Students should be encouraged to share their ideas and ask questions in a space that is free from ridicule and prejudice.

Before starting conversations around sexual health, set parameters around how the class will carry on respectful conversations such as telling students that:

- “Having different views about sex is okay, but discriminatory language is not.”
- “You may have different religious and/or cultural backgrounds which inform your values around sex, but homophobic and transphobic language will not be tolerated.”

2. When teaching sexual health education, don’t assume that everyone is going to be straight even if there are no “out” students within your class.
  - Regularly include videos and images in your lessons that depict same-sex couples and transgender people.
  - When teaching methods for having safe sex, include information about oral and anal safe-sex practices. Don’t assume that anal sex only applies to members of the LGBTQ community, or that all members of the LGBTQ community engage in one particular sexual activity like anal sex. There is great diversity of sexual practices amongst all people, regardless of self-identification.
  - Dispel the stereotype that AIDS is only a concern for gay people. Teach students that certain sexual activity comes with increased risk regardless of personal self-identification.
  - Don’t separate genders for specific information; it can make LGBTQ people feel uncomfortable because of the assumptions being made. All students will benefit from information about each other.
  - Make sure you bring up the term LGBTQ and inform students what this acronym stands for.

(L=lesbian, G=gay, B=bisexual, T=transgender or two-spirited, Q=queer or questioning)

3. Don’t limit discussions of sex to being just for reproduction. Most sexual activity occurs for reasons beyond wanting to reproduce. If sex education is exclusively framed as just for reproduction or in medicalized terms, then non-reproductive sex will become equated by some as unnatural.
4. Continue to educate yourself. Information about sexual health and sexual health education continues to evolve, though resources can often be limited depending upon your community. There are community groups, health professionals, and resources that are accessible. Some of them are listed online at [bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=21406](http://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=21406).