

Instruction and Assessment Units





UNIT 6: EXAMINING LGBT ISSUES

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Overview

This unit outlines a series of activities to be conducted based on selected lessons from *Challenging Homophobia in Schools* (Second Edition—GALE BC). This handbook was distributed to all schools in BC; for ordering information, visit www.galebc.org.

To orient themselves to the material, teachers are recommended to read the Rationale section of the *Challenging Homophobia*

resource, which contains factual and legal information, as well as the philosophy underlying the approach and lessons.

This unit also includes some additional activities to be conducted before and after the numbered Lessons from *Challenging Homophobia* (indicated by *).

An additional Background sheet (Facts and Myths about Anti-Homophobia Education) is provided at the end of this unit.





Prescribed Learning Outcomes

This unit can be used to help students achieve the following prescribed learning outcomes in whole or in part:

Defining Social Justice

A1 demonstrate understanding of concepts and terminology of social justice, including

- anthropocentrism
- equity and equality
- ethics
- diversity
- dignity and worth
- hegemony
- human rights
- oppression
- peace

A3 apply critical thinking skills to a range of social justice issues, situations, and topics

Recognizing and Analyzing Social Injustice

B1 describe social injustice based on characteristics including

- age
- marital or family status
- mental or physical ability
- political belief
- race and ethnicity
- religion and faith
- sex
- sexual orientation
- socioeconomic status

B5 analyse the roles played by legislation, the courts, public policy, and other forms of government action in promoting or failing to promote social justice in Canada

B7 assess the contributions of particular individuals and groups who are identified with struggles for social justice

Moving toward a Socially Just World

C4 assess lifelong opportunities related to social justice





Awareness

Due to the highly sensitive and potentially polarizing nature of this unit, it will be important to revisit (or initiate) a discussion of guidelines governing class discourse and activities.

Students should be made aware that the material of this unit may be sensitive or controversial to some people. It is acceptable to feel uncomfortable with the material, but basic ground rules of respect should be followed.

All members of the class have the right to ask questions and express ideas in an atmosphere of acceptance and respect. Many people have not been presented with factual information on this topic previously. An agreement to show and expect respect is essential.

Have students write a journal entry expressing their thoughts and feelings about this topic. This may be kept until the end of the unit when they can revisit this journal entry and examine any changes that have taken place since the beginning of the unit.

Privilege

Ask students to brainstorm the concept of “privilege” in our society. Explore the question: Who receives positive attention in our society?

This may be done as a whole class, or small groups may take a question to discuss and then present findings to the class.

Questions such as the following may be useful:

- What type of characteristics does an employer commonly look for?
- If two people applied to rent an apartment together, what might the apartment manager want to know?
- If two people are walking down the hallway holding hands, what assumptions would you make about them?

Have students fill out a “Polarities of Privilege” sheet (from the Lessons section of *Challenging*

Homophobia, page 4). Discuss the responses, focussing on common expectations that people fit into categories. Discuss the range or spectrum of diversities of all types that we see in society. Refer to “What is Heterosexual Privilege?” (Background, page 18 in the resource). Guide students in reading through this as a class.

Have students write a reflection journal about what they have learned about privilege, especially heterosexual privilege, in our society.

*Lesson 14: Awareness of Stereotyping

Lesson 14: Parts A, B, and C deal with stereotyping, both in general and specifically in relation to gender and sexual orientation.

Provide students with a copy of the Definitions handout (from Background, pages 1-5) for their reference.

Ask students to choose several terms from the definitions list and use them to describe the drawbacks and misconceptions contained in one of the stereotypes related to sexual orientation. A matching quiz could also be used to test knowledge of the terms.

*Lesson 20: A Sociometry of Oppressions

Alert: *This lesson should be undertaken with caution. Although the activity can serve to highlight various facets of oppression that exist in our society, there is also a danger of it potentially reinforcing the victimization stance among any students who do in fact fit the attributes that may cause one to be oppressed. Teachers should consider the individual and group dynamics of their class before conducting this lesson, and may choose to omit it altogether.*

This lesson allows students to take on a role and examine options, freedoms, and restrictions from within that role.





Conclude the activity with an Empathy Journal entry about the experience. This may describe what the student has become aware of as a result of the activity and discussion.

***Lesson 19: Myth Busting—How Do Myths Affect Us?**

Use this lesson to focus on how these myths are a form of stereotype, which is a type of social injustice in itself, but which also leads to discrimination. As a follow-up, have students investigate case studies where any of the myths cited have led to discrimination (e.g., cases where gay men have been denied jobs that involve working with children or adoption rights because of the myth that all pedophiles are gay; cases where gay men have been denied health insurance coverage because of the myth that all gay men have AIDS).

***Lesson 17: Caught in the Middle**

Conclude this lesson with an Empathy Journal entry.

Legal Advances in LGBT Rights in Canada and BC

Refer to Background, pages 11-17, as well as the Rationale, page 8.

Challenge students to create a timeline or poster that illustrates advances, federally and provincially.

Students should be aware of several legislators and activists who have encouraged or initiated changes in laws and policies. These include activists at a local level, in their school district or community, if possible. Speakers, case studies, and research would be appropriate methods to accomplish this.

Have students choose a topic for research such as

- advances in LGBT rights in BC and Canada
- role models in the struggle for LGBT social justice.

Relevant pages from the Background section of *Challenging Homophobia* can be used as a starting point for students' research.

Using print, online, visual, and interview sources (as appropriate), have students conduct their research to discover the following, as applicable:

- the main facts of the topic or individual's life
- any resulting accomplishments or significant changes
- effects on our laws or society.

Have students present this information in a speech or slide show for the rest of the class.

Career Futures

Encourage students to investigate opportunities to effect social change in careers by exploring the fields of law, politics, education, or business.

Students can conduct research on any career of their choice that includes a focus on opportunities for advancement and support for human rights. Students may also choose to examine a career from the point of view of workers' rights to determine what policies would support LGBT rights.

Have students present their findings in a Social Justice Career Fair. Invite other senior secondary classes to attend.

School Project

Have students work in small groups or individually to create and carry out a project that will promote a safer community for LGBT members of the school or community. Note that some students may choose to develop this project as their social justice action plan.

For example: Students may conduct an assessment of the school climate to ascertain where improvements may be





made. The questions to be answered could include any of the following:

- Is there discrimination against LGBT people in our school?
- Do LGBT people feel safe in our school?
- Are there safe places in our school?
- Is there an anti-harassment policy in our school or district?
- What evidence is there that all people, including individuals who are LGBT, are welcomed in our school?
- What activities in our school reflect inclusiveness?

Information may be gathered in several ways:

- personal experience and observation

- a survey of students and/or staff
- interviews with students, teachers, counsellors, and administrators.

Have students choose an appropriate format to share the results of their findings and make recommendations for change, as applicable. For example, students may mount an information campaign to educate the school community about LGBT issues. This could take the form of a poster campaign, a speech to other classes, a video project, a film festival, a letter-writing campaign, a presentation to the school staff, a presentation to the district staff or board of trustees. Alternatively, students may choose to organize a guest speaker or panel discussion, a drama presentation, a film festival, etc.





Background: Facts and Myths about Anti-Homophobia Education

(from the BC Teachers' Federation, www.bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=10392)

Sometimes people make assumptions about what is taught in schools without accurate knowledge. Misconceptions lead to emotional reactions including anger, anxiety, and fear. Here are some facts to help you better understand how schools operate.

Myth 1: Teaching about homosexuality in schools condones the lifestyle.

Fact 1: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people have lives like everyone else. There is no distinct LGBT “lifestyle.” Teachers often teach about unfamiliar topics to help students develop respect for other people and to acknowledge their contributions to society. A teacher’s job is to present accurate, age-appropriate information to students.

Myth 2: Teaching about homosexuality in schools involves talking about gay sex.

Fact 2: Anti-homophobia education can be done in a variety of ways. With the exception of some topics in *Health and Career Education* classes, teaching anti-homophobia involves no discussion of sexual behaviour or sexual practices whatsoever. Teachers may talk about LGBT role models in history, or read a story about same-gender families. They may also discuss the oppression of LGBT people and focus on stopping homophobic name-calling in schools. These are just a few examples of age-appropriate anti-homophobia education.

Myth 3: LGBT teachers have a gay agenda for public schools by introducing LGBT topics.

Fact 3: Teachers and principals have a legal obligation to respond to all forms of harassment and discrimination in schools. All students have the right to attend school in a safe environment—and expect to see their lives positively reflected in curriculum and classroom activities. Just as antiracism and multicultural education have been embraced by educators as worthy topics, there is also a growing awareness by educators that anti-homophobia has to be addressed. You do not have to be a person of colour to care about racism. Similarly, you do not have to be LGBT to fight homophobia in schools or society at large.

Myth 4: Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs (GSAs) in high schools are a way to recruit students and encourage them to experiment with being gay or lesbian.

Fact 4: No one suddenly chooses to become LGBT simply because they heard about the topic in school, from friends, or via their social circles. There is no known “cause” for a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity—whether that person identifies as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or transgender. Sexual orientation and gender identity are complex traits, and have been understood differently by different cultures and at different times in history. GSAs help all students to come together in a safe space to talk about issues that are important to them. GSAs help all students to learn from one another and make their school safe and more welcoming for students, staff, and families. Anyone can be the object of hateful slurs, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity.





Myth 5: Students will become more sexually active and/or promiscuous if they hear about LGBT issues at school.

Fact 5: Like it or not, some teenagers are sexually active. The decisions they make about their bodies have little to do with LGBT issues or anti-homophobia education. However, lack of information about safe sex can have dramatic and sometimes tragic consequences for youth. Promiscuity and unsafe sexual behaviours often occur when students do not have access to age-appropriate, accurate information.

Myth 6: LGBT issues are not part of the curriculum; some schools are just making this up.

Fact 6: The mandatory curriculum is established by the Ministry of Education. The *Health and Career Education* curricula include references to sexual orientation, discrimination, and sexual health. *Social Studies* includes curriculum on families, Canadian society, and human rights. Furthermore, public schools are secular, and have an obligation to be inclusive of the diverse communities they serve including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Anti-homophobia education is...

- inclusive of all members of our school communities.
- respectful of differences and inclusive of diversity.
- respectful of the *BC Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
- mindful that harassment and discrimination are present in our school system.
- mindful that silence around certain topics can be a form of discrimination.
- optimistic that a better school environment is possible for everyone.

Anti-homophobia education looks like...

- schools where all members of the school community can be accepted and open about their lives without fear or shame
- classrooms that acknowledge and respect diverse family models
- classrooms that acknowledge and positively represent the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people across the curriculum
- schools where students and educators speak out against injustice and inequity
- schools where youth can take the lead on concerns that are important to them
- school districts where there is knowledge and expertise available to support schools in this work.





Assessment Instrument

Empathy Journal

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes personalized, innovative, and thoughtful responses that demonstrate a high degree of empathy people who are LGBT (i.e., the person from whose point of view journal entry is being written) • provides specific evidence that demonstrates close familiarity with and understanding of issues related to the victimization or marginalization of people who are LGBT • interprets and analyses solutions related to achieving justice for people who are LGBT • shows evidence of reflecting on and revising initial responses • demonstrates near flawless writing and expression skills
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes personal and thoughtful responses that demonstrate clear empathy with people who are LGBT • provides specific evidence that demonstrates familiarity with and understanding of issues related to the victimization or marginalization of people who are LGBT • interprets and analyses some solutions related to achieving justice for people who are LGBT • demonstrates strong writing and expression skills
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes personal and generally thoughtful responses that demonstrate empathy with people who are LGBT • provides some specific evidence that demonstrates familiarity with and understanding of issues related to the victimization or marginalization of people who are LGBT • sometimes interprets and analyses solutions related to achieving justice for people who are LGBT • errors in writing and expression exist, but do not impede understanding
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes personal and sometimes thoughtful responses that may demonstrate empathy with people who are LGBT • may provide some evidence that demonstrates familiarity with and understanding of issues related to the victimization or marginalization of people who are LGBT • may attempt to interpret and analyse solutions related to achieving justice for people who are LGBT • errors in writing impede understanding and expression to some degree
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes responses that may demonstrate empathy with people who are LGBT; responses may not be personal in nature • limited evidence that demonstrates familiarity with and understanding of issues related to the victimization or marginalization of people who are LGBT • little or no attempt to interpret and analyse solutions related to achieving justice for people who are LGBT • errors in writing seriously impede understanding and expression

