

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEARNING: CO-EDUCATIONAL AND SAME-SEX CLASSES

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## **What the 2015 Health and Physical Education Curriculum says about co-educational and same-sex classes:**

Although all the curriculum expectations can be achieved in either co-educational or same-sex classes, addressing parts of the curriculum in same-sex settings may allow students to learn and ask questions with greater comfort. Same-sex settings may be of benefit to some students not only for the discussion of some health topics, but also for developing and practising some physical skills. Such considerations are particularly relevant in the case of adolescent learners.

It is also important to have time for co-educational learning, which can encourage learning about others, and about differences and commonalities among people, and allows for the development of relationship skills. Teachers should base their decisions about teaching in co-educational or same-sex settings on students' needs. Different strategies may be required at different times, so that students have opportunities to learn in a variety of different groupings.

When planning instruction and considering class groupings, teachers should be aware of and consider the needs of students who may not identify as "male" or "female", who are transgender, or who are gender-non-conforming. For more information about gender identity, gender expression, and human rights, see the website of the Ontario Human Rights Commission at [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/code\\_grounds/gender\\_identity](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/code_grounds/gender_identity).

Acknowledgement of and respect for individual differences regardless of sex or gender identity will encourage student participation and help students learn to collaborate with and respect others. Strategies for encouraging understanding and mutual respect among students include:

- creating an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the class and supporting all students to be active participants;

- fostering authentic opportunities for students to provide input into learning activities and approaches;
- providing opportunities for all students to assume leadership roles;
- encouraging and respecting the interests and abilities of all students;
- ensuring that responsibilities are shared equally by all students.

## SHORE Centre Workshops

At the SHORE Centre we think that both co-educational and same-sex classes can be beneficial to learning about sexual health. We also think it is beneficial for all students to learn about all bodies and how they function, not just about the body we assume they have or want. Often when teaching same-sex classes only, students in each class do not learn the same information, which can lead to confusion, misconceptions, fear and lack of knowledge and empathy. For example when discussing puberty in same-sex classes the students often do not learn how puberty affects all bodies only a male or female body. This can lead to future issues with relationships, sex and pregnancy. It can also lead to confusion, exclusion and feelings of not belonging for transgender and gender non-conforming students.

We understand that splitting classes by gender is done with good intentions to make students more comfortable and to respect religious and cultural beliefs. We have also found that comfort levels and acceptance of all bodies rise when students understand how and why all bodies function. We also understand that students may ask more questions when in same-sex groups and learn different skills such as how menstrual pads function.

If you would prefer your students be separated by gender we ask that if possible, we teach one class with all students, and follow up classes with them separated, so everyone learns how all bodies function. If you do not agree or have concerns or questions please contact us, we are flexible and understanding.