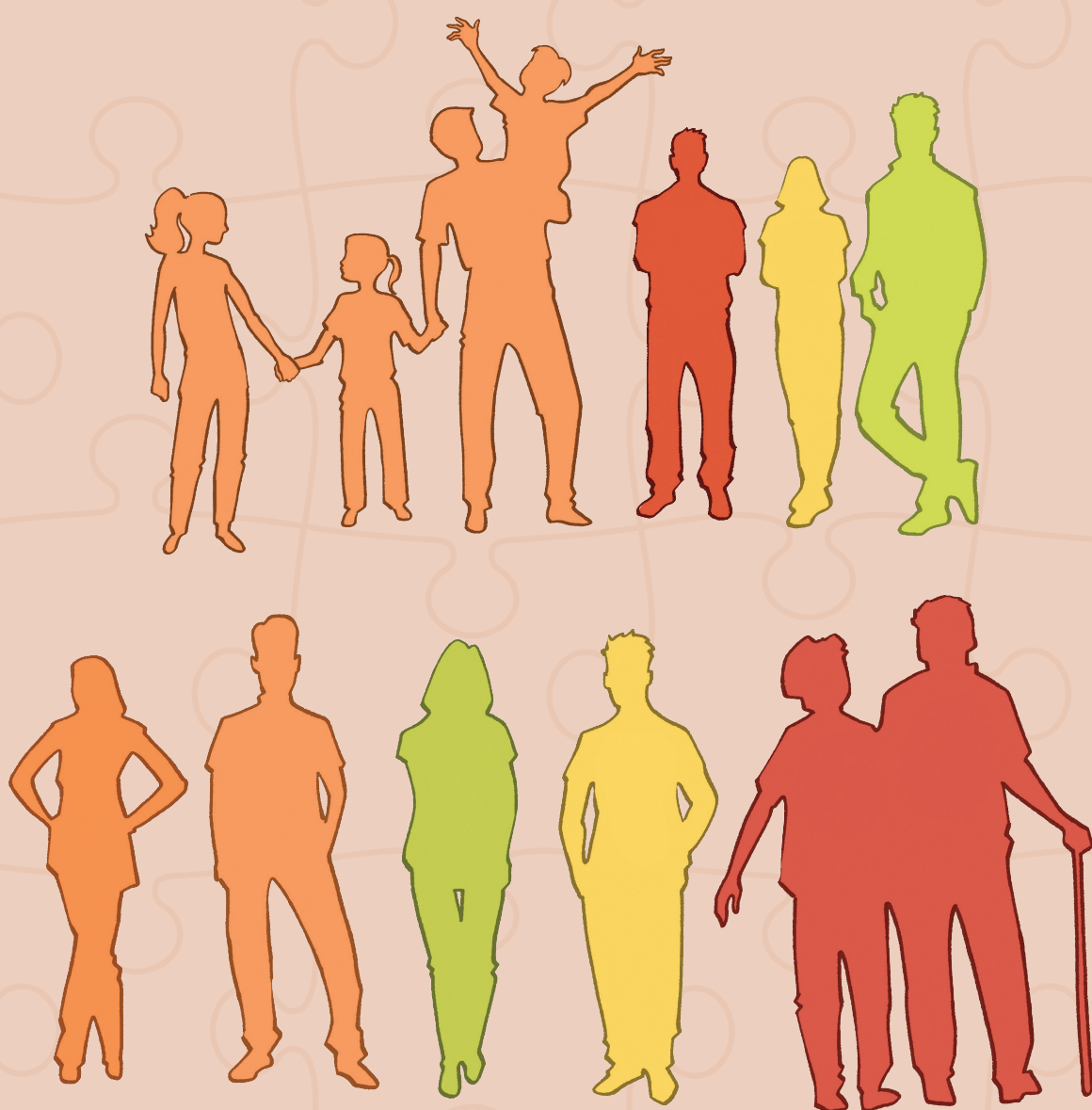


SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES



РЦСЕ

Ресурсни центар за специјалну едукацију

INTRODUCTION

This lesson plan is for educators and support people working with young people with intellectual disability and/or on the autism spectrum. It focuses on *Sexuality and sexual identities*, based on the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) framework. The lesson helps students learn about the wide range of sexual orientations – such as heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, and pansexuality – in a clear and respectful way. It encourages students to understand and respect different identities, helps to build acceptance, reduce stigma, and supports students in feeling confident and positive about who they are.

This lesson plan uses evidence-based practices (EBPs), which are recognised as best practice for teaching students with intellectual disability and/or on the autism spectrum. It supports teacher delivery by providing structured resources, including visual supports and age-appropriate educational videos developed by [Amaze.org](https://amaze.org).

This lesson is part of *Sex education for students with intellectual disability and on the autism spectrum: A practical methodology guide*, a resource that supports educators to deliver accessible, inclusive, and trauma-informed sex education to students aged 15 and over with intellectual disability and/or on the autism spectrum. Grounded in evidence-based practices, the Guide promotes the rights of students to sexual autonomy, safety, and well-being, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals, which call for inclusive education, gender equality, and good health for all. The lesson content also reflects the key concepts outlined in the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE), ensuring that teaching is comprehensive, rights-based, and responsive to the learning needs and aspirations of students with disability.

[Full Guide](#)

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Disclaimer

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Sexuality and sexual identities



What does it mean?

Teaching students about different sexualities and sexual identities involves explaining that sexuality is a broad and diverse aspect of human experience that encompasses a range of attractions and orientations. This includes educating students about heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, asexuality, pansexuality, and other sexual orientations. The aim is to help students understand that sexual identity is unique to each person and can vary greatly. This education promotes acceptance, respect, and empathy for the diversity of sexual orientations, encouraging students to appreciate and support both their own and others' sexual identities.



Why is it important?

Understanding different sexualities and sexual identities is important for high school students with intellectual disability and/or on the autism spectrum because it fosters acceptance and empathy towards the diverse ways people experience attraction and relationships. Additionally, research states that people on the autism spectrum report higher rates of sexual attractions beyond heterosexuality compared to their peers without autism¹. This knowledge helps students develop a positive sense of self and respect for others, reducing stigma and discrimination. It promotes a supportive environment where all individuals feel valued and understood, which is essential for their emotional and social well-being.

Learning outcomes based on teacher's and student's perspectives



Learning outcomes

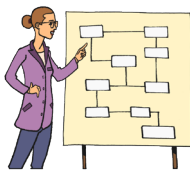
Students can give examples of different sexualities and sexual identities.

Students can describe homophobia.

Accessible learning outcome

I can list examples of different sexualities.

I can describe what homophobia is.



EXAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Topic: **Sexuality and sexual identities**

Note for teachers:

Teachers should use their professional judgement when teaching this topic as students in your class may be questioning their sexuality identity or living openly as gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual or pansexual. This is a topic that could bring up students' experience of being subjected to bullying, ensure that your classroom is a safe place for all students and that you model appropriate language and attitudes for all students to feel included. In addition to heterosexual and homosexual orientations, students may express or disclose a range of sexual interests or identities, some of which may be considered non-normative. It is important for educators to respond in a respectful, non-judgmental, and supportive manner, recognising that all students — including those with disability — have the right to explore and understand their sexuality in a safe and inclusive environment.

If a student expresses or demonstrates a sexual interest that causes concern, particularly if it involves risk of harm to

themselves or others, or includes non-consensual themes, educators should respond with sensitivity and discretion. This may involve initiating a private, respectful conversation with the student and, where appropriate, involving parents or carers in a way that upholds the student's dignity and privacy.

If required, teachers should follow their school's established referral processes to connect students with a qualified professional, such as a psychologist, school counsellor, or sexologist, to support the student's wellbeing. It is essential that any concerns are managed confidentially and that information is not shared beyond those directly involved in supporting the student's needs. Educators should avoid assumptions and approach all conversations with the understanding that sexuality is diverse and that students with disability, like all students, benefit from accurate information, emotional support, and access to appropriate services.

Research tells us that individuals with intellectual disability and/or on the autism spectrum are not inherently more likely to engage in inappropriate sexual behaviours because of their diagnosis. Instead, such behaviours often result from negative developmental experiences, limited social learning, poor communication skills, and a lack of appropriate sex education^{2, 3}. Promoting healthy psychosexual development requires supportive family environments, clear communication, and sex education tailored to individual learning needs.

Learning outcomes	EBP/teaching strategy	Resources needed
Students can give examples of different sexualities and sexual identities.	Visual support	Poster paper
Students can describe homophobia.		Art supplies Appendix 1: Matching different sexual identities

Lesson sequence

Introduction: Ask students what they know about different sexual identities.

Prompts:

- What are some of the different sexual identities?
- Have you heard the words gay or lesbian before?
- Do you know what these words mean?



Activity 1: Sexual orientation explained

As a class, watch video the [Sexual orientation explained](#) video on Amaze.org.

What did we learn from this video?

Prompts:

- Does everyone have a sexual orientation?
- Do we all have the same sexual orientation?
- Can you remember some of the different sexual orientations?



Activity 2: Draw the definition

Students are to work as a class or in small groups to complete the activity. Students add visuals and drawings to the definitions of different sexual identities. Students are encouraged to be respectful during this activity. For the activity, the teacher can distribute [Appendix 1: Matching different sexual identities](#).

- Heterosexual – men who are sexually attracted to women
– women who are sexually attracted to men

- Gay – men who are sexually attracted to men
- Lesbian – women who are sexually attracted to women
- Bisexual – someone who is sexually attracted to both men and women
- Asexual – someone who does not feel sexual attraction
- Pansexual – someone who is attracted to people of all genders



Activity 3: What is homophobia?

As a class discuss what homophobia means.

“Homophobia is when someone has negative attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people.”

Prompts:

- Have you heard or seen someone be homophobic?
- Have you seen homophobia in the media (on TV or in the news)?
- How do you think LGBTQIA+ people feel when someone is homophobic towards them?



Activity 4: How to be a LGBTQIA+ ally?

As a class, watch the [How to be a LGBTQIA+ ally?](#) video on Amaze.org.

What did we learn from this video?

Prompts:

- What does it mean to be an ally?
 - “It is someone who does not identify as LGBTQIA+ but supports and stands up for people that are”.
- What were the suggestions from the video about being a good ally?
 - Let them know they can talk to you.
 - Stand up for them if they are being bullied for their identity.
 - Get involved in an organisation or group that supports the LGBTQIA+ community.
- What are some of the supports students can access?
 - school counselors,
 - trusted adults, or
 - support organisations.



Activity 5: Posters for supporting LGBTQIA+ people

Students can work individually or in groups to create a poster about:

- Raising awareness about homophobia, or
- Our school is a safe place for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Provide students with different resources including:

- Magazines
- Catchy slogans
- Visuals you have prepared (you can use the visuals from [Appendix 1: Matching different sexual identities](#))
- Pens and poster paper

Prompts:

- What is the key message for your poster?
- Can you think of a catchy slogan?
- What visuals could you use to get your message across?
- Will you provide resource information like a support hotline or a website link on your poster?

Conclusion: Recap what was learnt this lesson, emphasising the importance of being an ally and supporting friends who face challenges related to their sexual orientation.

Ask students if they can tell you some of the different sexual orientations.

Ask students to recall the 3 suggestions for being a good ally:

1. Let them know they can talk to you.
2. Stand up for them if they are being bullied for their identity.
3. Get involved in an organisation or group that supports the LGBTQIA+ community.

Remind students that there is support available to them or their friends, for example, school counselors, trusted adults, or support organisations.

**Teacher reflection**

Reflect on the lesson asking yourself:

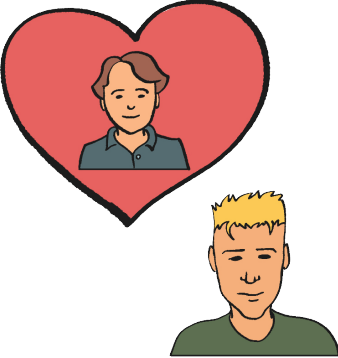
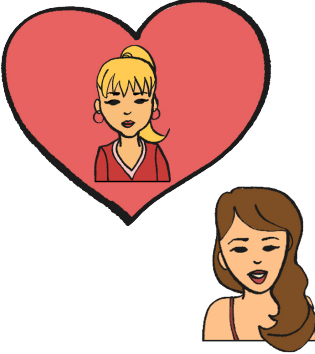
- Did the lesson cater to the diverse learning preferences and needs of the students?
- Did the students feel safe enough to openly discuss sexual orientation?
- How can I build on this lesson to support students to continue to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills for understanding different sexual identities and standing up against homophobia?
- Were there any parts of this lesson that should be recapped or repeated to help students consolidate their learning?

References

- 1 Saroca, K. L., Walters, F. P., Ahmed, I., & Grubb, L. K. (2018). Empowering adolescents with intellectual disability: Enhancing sexual health education through community collaboration. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 62*(2), S71-S72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.11.145>
- 2 Fornalik, I. (2020). Intellectual Disabilities. *Psychiatry and Sexual Medicine* (pp. 321–340). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52298-8_22
- 3 Parchomiuk, M. (2021). Unsuccessful developmental experiences of people with ID and ASD as risk factors for disorders in psychosexual functioning. *Sexuality and Disability, 39*(4), 687–702. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1195-021-09672-5>

Appendix 1: Matching different sexual identities

[BACK](#)

Heterosexual	Gay	Lesbian
Women who are sexually attracted to men	Men who are sexually attracted to men	Women who are sexually attracted to women
Men who are sexually attracted to women		

Bisexual	Asexual	Pansexual
Someone who is sexually attracted to both men and women	Someone who does not feel sexual attraction	Someone who is attracted to people of all genders
