

Oak Park Our Whole Lives 4th & 5th grade Curriculum

The OP-OWL 4th & 5th grade curriculum consists of 8 workshops on a variety of subjects. Each workshop begins with a "re-entry" in which youth are asked to reflect on ways in which the topic might be relevant to their lives, now or in future; a reading; and answering the previous week's "Question Box" questions. Each workshop ends with all students contributing to the "Question Box" - a system that allows them to ask questions anonymously.

The book *It's Perfectly Normal*, by Robie M. Harris, is given to all participants and used as a reference for many questions and topics.

Values and Sexuality

In this first session, youth meet the facilitators and one another and get oriented to the structure of the program. Participants identify things they like about themselves, do a fun values activity, and talk about prejudice and stereotypes. During the last 30 minutes of the class, the group comes together with their parents to create a "pact" of rules for respectful interaction and play a circle game together.

Family relationships

This session helps participants define the meaning of family and explore the diversity, richness, and creativity of families today. Participants will do brainstorming about family roles and what makes a family, and talk about how friendships and family relationships are alike and different.

Puberty: Physical and Emotional Changes

The concept of puberty is introduced in this session, and the many changes all youth will go through - and some that are specific to the sexes - are discussed. Students do an "alike and different" brainstorming activity and talk about their concerns and the things they look forward to as they grow and change.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

This session introduces the idea that gender roles do not have to be rigid and that people have many choices about how they behave and live their lives. Through brainstorming ideas and discussions, students learn about diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation.

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Lovemaking and Reproduction

There are many ways that people can express love for one another, and this session includes a discussion about how sexual intercourse is only one of those ways. Small group discussions about decisions around lovemaking - the reasons people do it or choose not to do it - lead into a full-group discussion about shared and different values. A fun activity around conception and a brief discussion of new babies complete this session.

Health and Safety

Information about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), self-protection, and how to seek help in abusive situations are all part of this session. The group will learn terms and play a "fact or fiction" game about various aspects of sexual health. They go through hypothetical scenarios in a "situation station" activity and then list the names of safe people whom they could tell if something frightening or bad happened to them.

Communication

Participants discuss the ways people talk (or don't talk) about sexual anatomy and topics, and how lack of comfort a common language can make communication difficult. They learn and practice simple communication skills that help them express themselves, including an active listening activity. Finally, they practice sending clear messages around difficult issues through a role playing activity.

Decision-Making

This session talks about messages about sexuality that students receive from the media, families, peers, and elsewhere. Youth discuss ways in which those messages might influence their decision-making. They create a personal timeline, including setting short-term goals for themselves, and talk about how the consequences of decisions might change their lives in positive or negative ways. The end of this session involves a celebration and closure activity, often involving celebratory snacks and/or cake.