

Think Pink Day!
February 23, 2013

Educate and celebrate in your Secondary classroom
For more information, go to www.dayofpink.org.

The BCTF urges teachers and schools to focus on gender-role stereotyping and gender-based teasing and homophobia, as this was the origin of the movement. Here is a list of lesson ideas you might use on that day:

- Ask students if they know where “Pink Day” started. If not, tell them it started when someone was teased for wearing a pink shirt to school. Do they think it was a boy or a girl? What names do they think he might have been called? Talk with students about today’s meaning of the word gay (i.e., someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of their own sex). Use the “That’s so Gay!” poster with your class. Ask students if they have heard/used this expression and when. Ask whether the phrase is hurtful and why (it is used to describe something as weird or bad and thus equates gay people as weird or bad). Explain what homophobia is—a fear and misunderstanding of gay or lesbian people (often due to invisibility) which can lead to prejudice and discrimination. Discuss the harm of homophobia to students who have gay family members, to students who don’t fit gender stereotypes, and to all of us.
- Draw analogies between racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression in discussions with students. Have students write paragraphs on what homophobia looks and sounds like in their schools and communities, and what can be done about it. Teach about the harm caused by the phrase “That’s so gay!” and explain that anyone can be the target of homophobia—sometimes just because of the colour of their clothing.
- Brainstorm common stereotypes for various groups. Discuss whether there can be such a thing as a “positive” stereotype. How do stereotypes cause harm? How do they limit our understanding of individuals and groups? If it’s used in a joke, are stereotypes OK?
- Discuss the difference between “sex” (biological) and “gender” (societal). We sometimes assume that these are binary, but nature is diverse and includes many variations. It may be helpful to see gender as a spectrum, and that people may be at various places along the spectrum depending on their personalities and interests.
- Make “Think Pink!” posters or signs and work with students to design slogans or images to prevent homophobic bullying. Show antiracism posters as models for ideas. Draw analogies between racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression with students.
- Read books which positively portray lesbian, gay, and transgender characters in your classroom. For a list of age appropriate books see your safe contact or teacher-librarian, or go to: www.pride.net and click on the resources icon on the home page.

- Do a “temperature activity.” Have signs for *Strongly Agree* and *Strongly Disagree* at opposite ends of the room (some statements are more opinion while some are factual). Ask students to move to different places in the room based upon where they stand on various statements. You may use these as examples:
 1. When stereotypes are funny, it’s OK.
 2. Saying “That’s so Gay!” is hurtful/discriminatory.
 3. Our school is a safe and welcoming place for gay and lesbian students.
 4. I would be completely comfortable if a friend told me he/she was gay.
 5. Being gay is different to being transgender. (Gay is about sexual orientation or who one is attracted to, whereas transgender is about gender identity or how someone describes their internal sense of gender).
 6. Being gay or transgender is something you choose.(While much research points to genetic or hormonal causes, it’s still inconclusive, however most gay people say they had no choice and felt different from an early age).

- Read and discuss the book, *The Harvey Milk Story*. Ask if they know of any gay or lesbian politicians today (i.e., Vancouver city councillors Tim Stevenson and Ellen Woodsworth, Vancouver MLAs Jenn McGinn and Spencer Herbert, MPs Libby Davies and Scott Brison). Ask if the rights of gay and lesbian people have changed over the years. Are there jobs that gays and lesbians can’t do?

- Discuss what feeling or emotions come up for people when they see pink. What associations do students make with pink? Where do these come from and why? Ask what colours are used to package and display children’s toys in stores? Discuss the role of media in shaping our ideas about gender.

- Create a “sea of pink” in the classroom. Have students write and illustrate stories about life in a world of pink where homophobia and other forms of discrimination don’t exist.