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Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume IV: Student Diversity and Its Contribution to Their Learning

Planning for Student Diversity When Teaching About Puberty

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.04.05
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Students in any 4th or 5th grade class (where puberty education takes place as part of the Social Development Program) are diverse in many ways. This diversity has an effect on their ability to learn about puberty (which introduces education about human sexuality) and on the teacher's strategies for teaching about puberty.

This unit highlights three of the ways in which children are diverse: their personal stage of physical development, their experience and/or expectations about sex and growing up, and the cultural, ethnic and religious and family background they come from. The educational needs of individual children can vary as much as these characteristics. The unit proposes strategies for teaching to this diverse grouping of children, as well as separating out the 20% or so of the group who may be called "precocious" in terms of their getting involved in sexual activities at this young age.

Another component of the unit attempts to integrate two major features of New Haven Public School Curriculum and philosophy. Dr. James Comer's six developmental pathways are examined and applied to what children need to learn about puberty in order to continue positive development. And the social and emotional skills which are taught through the Second Step Curriculum have a real and useful application to learning about growing up and developing as a knowledgeable and caring sexual human being. This unit includes a chart which integrates all these components as a reminder and an easy reference tool.

(Recommended for Social Development, grades 4-5)

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