

ALL GENDERS WELCOME!

Creating Inclusive Classrooms for Comprehensive Sex Education

Sex Ed for All means that *everyone* is welcome in the classroom. Decades and generations ago, boys and girls were segregated in sex education classes. Today, we recognize the benefits of inclusive classrooms. Here are the top seven reasons.

- 1. More than two genders exist.** The Pew Research Center reports about 5% of American adults under age 30 identify as transgender or nonbinary,¹ around 2.7 million young Americans. So, when a teacher instructs boys to go here and girls to go there, they are making a biased declaration that implies the existence of only two genders, disregarding the authentic identities students possess or are in the process of developing.
- 2. Genders are mixed for every subject at every grade level.** We don't teach social studies by having one gender learning about George Washington and another about Martha Washington. English literature isn't taught with one gender reading Emily Dickinson and another reading William Shakespeare. Altering the routine for sex education isolates the topic, perpetuating secrecy and shame.
- 3. Including all genders fosters communication.** It is a myth that boys and girls will be comfortable discussing sexual issues only in same-gender groups. Discomfort and communication barriers can exist across genders and in all groups, and they are a normal part of the learning process. The solution is not separating the genders, but in teaching strategies that foster trust and facilitate communication. This can be effectively achieved in inclusive groups.
- 4. Inclusive groups build empathy and emotional connectedness.** Gender-segregated groups may steer clear of topics deemed irrelevant by the teacher. However, students develop empathy by learning about erections, menstruation, and other bodily functions, even if not their own. Discussions on body image, consent, relationships, and other topics within inclusive groups facilitate thoughtful learning and emotional connectedness. Omission of topics or learning in gender-segregated groups perpetuates mystery, leading to shame, stigma, and teasing.
- 5. Students have questions about other genders.** Boys, girls, nonbinary, and transgender students are all naturally curious about their own and other genders' development. Maintaining gender segregation limits opportunities to understand diverse genders.
- 6. Inclusive classes facilitate an understanding that there are emotions, experiences, and interests common to all genders.** We have come a long way from antiquated beliefs that exaggerated gender differences to the point of likening people to being from different planets! By exploring gender similarities, we can potentially reduce misunderstandings among genders.
- 7. Inclusive classes foster an understanding of gender differences.** By including all genders, students appreciate diverse characteristics, including biological and learned differences. They gain insights into their own gender's unique strengths.

¹ Pew Research Center. (2022, June 7). About 5% of young adults in the U.S. say their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/06/07/about-5-of-young-adults-in-the-u-s-say-their-gender-is-different-from-their-sex-assigned-at-birth>