Curriculum links

WA Curriculum

HPE: Personal identity and change

- Strategies and resources to understand and manage the physical, mental/emotional, and social changes and transitions associated with puberty

International technical guidance on sexuality education

Key concept 6.1 Sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology (9-12 years)

- Everyone's body has parts involved in one's sexual health and reproduction, and it is common for children to have questions about them.

Key concept 6.3 Puberty (9-12 years)

- Puberty signals changes in a person's reproductive capability.

Materials

- A3 paper [one per student]
- Teaching Resource: *Changes in puberty*
- Student Activity Sheet: *Male or female changes?*

Before you get started

- The topic of puberty may be an exciting and interesting topic for some. Be mindful that some students may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or worried learning how their bodies are going to be changing. Increase the comfort of students through introducing this topic with excitement and fun. Providing popcorn (or something similar) for students to share can be a fun way to reduce their anxiety levels.
- Students may have questions that they feel uncomfortable to ask. Providing a question box for students to place their questions in anonymously will ensure their questions are answered in a safe environment.
- The WA Department of Health has developed a free resource for parents: *Talk Soon. Talk Often. A Guide for Parents Talking to their Kids About Sex*. It is recommended that teachers communicate to parents and explain the topics that will be covered such as healthy relationships, puberty, hygiene, emotions, resilience, etc. and that you are not teaching their child to have 'sex'.

- *Puberty kits:* The use of a puberty kit can be a useful tool in the classroom. Check with your school's public health nurse to see if there are any kits readily available or that can be made up to use.
- If you are using an educational video students can often be distracted if the videos are obviously out of date, as evidenced by the clothes, hairstyles and quality of the video, although this could be used to add humour to the experience. Ensure that any multimedia used is current, relevant and appropriate, and sufficient time is allocated for a discussion afterwards.
- Many teachers ask the question of whether or not they should separate the boys and the girls for such classes. Research shows that there is no significant difference for either strategy. You may choose to separate your class by gender, keep them all together or mix strategies by separating your class for certain activities. If you do choose to separate the sexes, ensure that both groups receive the same information. It is just as important for students to learn about their changing bodies as it is for them to learn what the other sex is going through in order to promote compassion. Remember when making this decision that all students need to overcome any potential discomfort in order to be able to effectively communicate sexual matters in relationships when they are older. Read the Co-ed or segregated? page for some further information.
- Consider providing students with a copy of the *Puberty booklet* to take home and read.
- Refer to the Guide: Puberty for further content information related to this activity. You can also review The practical guide to love, sex and relationships, Topic 1: Puberty.

Learning activities

Group Agreement

5 minutes

Teaching tip: A group agreement must be established before any Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) program begins to ensure a safe learning environment. Read Essential Tool: Establishing a group agreement for tips on how to create one and what to include.

1. Revise or create the class group agreement.

Whole Class

20 minutes

This activity involves the students brainstorming the changes that occur during puberty.

2. Divide the class into 4 groups and play the *Alphabet Game* to list words (or phrases) associated with puberty. Each group needs to develop a list of words associated with puberty corresponding to each letter of the alphabet, e.g. A = anxious, B = breasts, ... Z = zits.
   - Ensure physical, social and emotional words are included in the list.
   - Use the examples in the Teaching Resource: *Changes in puberty* to prompt students if needed.
   - When the list has been completed, encourage the students to think about physical changes (e.g. grow underarm hair), social changes (e.g. become interested in having a boyfriend or girlfriend) and emotional changes (e.g. become embarrassed more easily) as a way of categorising the different types

of change they have suggested. Circle or highlight each change in a different colour depending on the category it belongs to.
- Identify the areas that suggest a lack of knowledge or understanding as an area for future development. Encourage students to demonstrate independence and initiative by attempting to acquire the information themselves or by asking questions via the question box. Encourage students to refer to their puberty booklets.

3. Have students develop a group definition for puberty. For example: *Puberty is when your body begins to change from the body of a child to an adolescent and then into an adult. It does not happen all at once. It happens in stages and starts according to each person's own body clock.*

Independent or Small Group

10 minutes

Students extend their understanding of puberty in this activity by identifying whether the changes that occur are gender specific and whether they are physical, social or emotional changes. This will provide the foundation to discuss coping strategies in the reflection activity.

3. Provide students with A3 paper, which they need to divide into three columns with the headings Male, Female and Both, and 3 rows with the headings Physical, Emotional and Social (refer to the Student Activity Sheet: *Male or female changes?*).
   - Using the list of changes from the whole class activity they should record each change under the appropriate heading.
   - Students can add potential changes they know of that were not mentioned in the whole class activity using a different coloured pen.

3-2-1 Reflection

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15 minutes

4. As a class, review student results from the independent task.
   - Identify similarities and commonalities amongst the students' results.
   - Discuss and clarify any misconceptions.
   - Highlight that the changes that occur during puberty happen to different people at different times.
5. Acknowledge that puberty may be a stressful transition for some young people. Stress that we can all feel sensitive about our bodies at this time of our lives and we need to be respectful of each other's feelings.
   - Discuss potential feelings and ways of coping with changes, how the changes may affect the students' behaviour, and other people's reactions to the changes that are taking place.
   - Discuss strategies to help deal with these situations that may arise as a result of the changes people experience during puberty.
6. Ask:

   How might a young person feel when they start to develop pubic hair?

   How might a young person feel when they start to develop acne?

Are our feelings guided by the change being public or private? Why/why not?

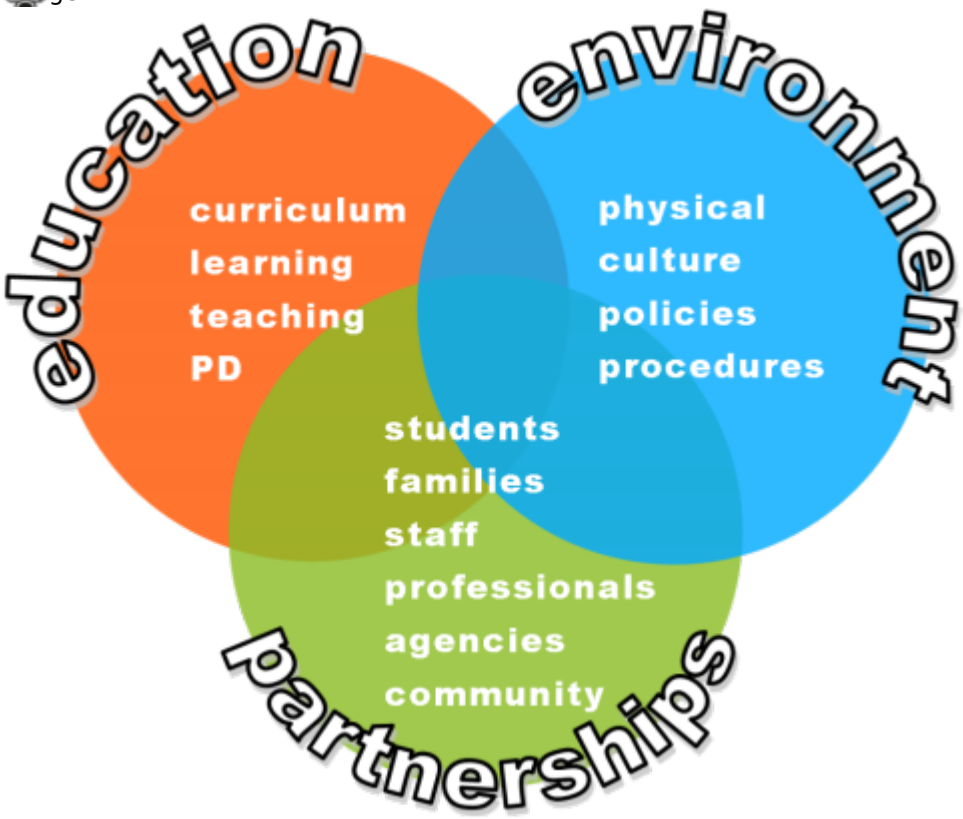
How might a young person behave if another person makes a comment about his or her acne?

What sort of self-talk would help you if you were embarrassed by some external body change due to puberty (e.g. facial hair developing, chest widening, breasts developing, hips widening)?

7. Highlight that the physical changes associated with puberty allow people to reproduce. However, being pregnant and having a baby is a major life transition and can impact significantly on a person's lifestyle (physically, emotionally, socially, financially).

Health promoting schools

Image



Education

- Seek support from the school nurse if you are feeling unsure about teaching about puberty or to answer questions you do not feel confident to answer.

Environment

- Address bully or comments about students who have already begun puberty and their bodies.

Partnership

- Provide a copy of the Puberty booklet to parents to help continue the discussion at home.

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