

FACILITATION GUIDE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

HOMO PHO BIUS

[homofobeus]

**HOMOPHOBIA AND
SEXUAL STEREOTYPING
HAVE NO PLACE IN
OUR SCHOOLS!**



ENSEMBLE CONTRE

l'intimidation

 Pacific Path
Institute

Maribourg Center | Conflict Resolution | Social Mediation

Québec 

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HOMOPHOBIA AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPING HAVE NO PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!



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TITLE OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

**“L’homophobius, Pas de place pour l’homophobie et les stéréotypes sexuels à l’école,
Guide d’animation primaire”**

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THE PARTNERS

INSTITUT PACIFIQUE

The Institut Pacifique is a non-profit organization created in 1976 and devoted to the development of programs and services to promote expertise in conflict resolution and mediation among pre-school, elementary and secondary school students. It has earned a reputation for the quality and serious nature of its activities, and now teaches peaceful conflict resolution to more than 105 000 students every year.

MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT

Preventing and stopping violence and bullying in schools are priorities for the Québec government, as is the safety of students and school staff for the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). School boards and schools, by enforcing the *Act to prevent and stop bullying and violence in schools*, play an important role in achieving these goals. MELS supports and assists the school system with this task, by providing funding, expertise from regional support officers, and tools and reference documents for school staff.

LINE CHAMBERLAND

Line Chamberland, a trained sociologist, has done extensive research on the subject of homophobic attitudes and behaviour in Québec's secondary schools, and their impact on drop-out rates among students of different sexual orientations. Her findings reveal overlap between homophobia and sexual stereotypes. Homophobic gestures and insults target not only those students whose real or perceived sexual orientation does not conform to heterosexual standards, but also those whose appearance or behaviour differs from stereotypical gender-related standards.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Our special thanks go to GRIS-Montréal,¹ GRIS-Québec, the LGBT Family Coalition and the Fondation Émergence for their important contributions during the preparation of this document. Their publications, along with the documentation they offer to the general public, were extremely valuable as sources of information. We are delighted that this guide and the related teaching activities will add to the supply of resources and documentation aimed at preventing homophobic behaviour, as a complement to the other resources and activities proposed by the organizations themselves.

¹GRIS: Groupe de recherche et d'intervention sociale

DESCRIPTION

HOMOPHOBIA AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPING HAVE NO PLACE IN OUR SCHOOLS!

The 2014 edition of Anti-Bullying and Violence Awareness Week at School targets homophobia and sexual stereotyping. Its slogan is: *Homophobia and sexual stereotyping have NO place in our schools!*

Preventing bullying and violence in schools is a major concern for the general public and a priority for the Québec government. Premier Philippe Couillard has announced a forum on the subject, to take place on October 2, 2014, for stakeholders in every sphere of society where bullying and violence are issues.

Anti-Bullying and Violence Awareness Week at School, launched in 2012 by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, serves as a springboard for initiatives by school boards and schools to raise awareness of the impact that bullying and violence in general, and homophobia in particular, can have on victims. Teaching and promotional materials are made available to schools for this purpose, and can be found on a Web site developed specifically for the Week:

www.homophobius.com

To be effective, bullying and violence prevention initiatives in schools (including those aimed at homophobia) need input from everyone concerned, in their respective communities.

This guide is a pedagogical tool designed for use by teachers and school staff to:

- help them become more aware of homophobia and sexual stereotyping
- help them become more aware of the importance of developing social skills in order to prevent homophobia and fight sexual stereotyping
- provide support for their pedagogical activities on homophobia and sexual stereotyping (see section on Proposed Pedagogical Activities)

SOME DEFINITIONS . . .

Before offering activities on the topics of homophobia and sexual stereotyping, it is useful to define some of the more important concepts.

BISEXUAL PERSON

This term refers to a man or woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to people of both sexes.

Gai Écoute

GENDER NON-CONFORMITY

This term is used to describe a person whose appearance, interests, leisure activities or behaviour are not consistent with the feminine norm (for a woman) or the masculine norm (for a man).

HETEROSEXISM

Heterosexism is defined as follows: “Affirmation of heterosexuality as a social norm or the highest form of sexual orientation; social practice that conceals the diversity of sexual orientations and identities in everyday representations, social relations and social institutions, in particular by taking for granted that all people are heterosexual.”

MINISTÈRE DE LA JUSTICE, *Québec Policy Against Homophobia* (Québec, 2009), 14.

HOMOPARENTAL FAMILY

A family is described as homoparental when one parent or both parents are homosexual or lesbian.

Gai Écoute

HOMOPHOBIA

Homophobia is defined as: “psychological and social hostility toward different sexual orientations, aimed not only at homosexual people, but also at people whose appearance or behaviour differs from the prescribed social standards for masculinity or femininity.”

Conseil permanent de la jeunesse, *Recherche-avis – Sortons l'homophobie du placard . . . et de nos écoles secondaires* (Québec, 2007), 8 (translation).

HOMOSEXUAL PERSON

This term refers to a man or woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to people of his or her own sex.

Gai Écoute

HOSTILE BEHAVIOUR

Hostile behaviour includes physical, verbal and social aggression, or aggressive online behavior. It conveys disapproval or contempt. *Hostile homophobic behaviour* consists in denigrating or showing contempt for people of different sexual orientations or people with gender non-conforming attitudes.

LGBTI

This abbreviation refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and intersexual communities. The letter “Q” (LGBTIQ) is sometimes added to include people who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY

To be open means being aware of one’s prejudices and reactions to difference, and then taking the time to get to know, listen to, consider and respect the other person as a unique individual.

PREJUDICE

A prejudice is a preconceived opinion based on a stereotype. Generally speaking, it is an unfavourable judgment made by an individual about someone he or she does not know, by assigning characteristics typical of the group to which the other person belongs.

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SEXISM

Sexism is a discriminatory attitude toward women. It involves random, rigid, restrictive and recurrent associations of personal characteristics and social roles with one or other of the sexes. Sexism limits an individual’s potential for development.

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dossiers-thematiques/condition-feminine/sexisme-hypersexualisation-et-stereotypes-sexuels/>

(French only)

SEXUAL IDENTITY OR GENDER IDENTITY

When considering issues relating to sexual orientation and homosexuality, it is important to begin by defining the notion of sexual identity or gender identity which, in all heterosexual, bi-sexual or homosexual people, is reflected in the sense of belonging that they may or may not feel toward their biological gender. In other words, the conviction of being a man or a woman is referred to as sexual identity or gender identity.

Gai Écoute

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation is defined as an emotional and sexual attraction toward people of the same sex or of another sex. It therefore refers to the whole range of human sexuality, and applies equally to gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people. It forms an integral part of personal identity, i.e. a person's self-perception and the perception others have of him or her.

Groupe de travail mixte contre l'homophobie, *De l'égalité juridique à l'égalité sociale – Vers une stratégie nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie* (PDF). Consultation Report, 2007.

SEXUAL STEREOTYPE

A stereotype is a simplified representation of a given situation based on one or more characteristics of an individual or group. It may be associated with either gender.

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dossiers-thematiques/condition-feminine/sexisme-hypersexualisation-et-stereotypes-sexuels/>
(French only).

HOMOPHOBIA AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPES IN SCHOOLS: DID YOU KNOW?

Homophobia and sexual stereotypes have significant consequences for students. The negative impact suffered by members of sexual minorities are a direct result of homophobia, not sexual orientation. Moreover, all students are likely to be affected by hostile homophobic behaviour or judgments based on sexual stereotypes, which have a proven impact on their fulfillment at school, and also on their mental and physical health.

Roughly 79% of Québecers admit hearing unpleasant remarks about homosexual people or homosexuality in general, often or occasionally, in their everyday lives.¹

In all, 88% of incidents involving bullying of the LGBTIQ community take place in schools.²

Young people who have a conservative view of gender (male or female) are most likely **to be uncomfortable** with non-standard sexual experiences and to be actively homophobic.³

Young homosexuals who are not personally targeted by violent behaviour often **suffer as a result of homophobic remarks and violence toward others.**⁴

Every child is a potential target for homophobic insults.⁵

Gender non-conformity can be upsetting because it reminds people that **there are many different ways of being a man or a woman or, simply put, a human being**, over and above biology, physiology and appearance.⁶

Sexual orientation is often wrongly referred to as a “choice.” Clearly, however, people do not consciously choose the things that attract them. Their sexual orientation and love lives develop as a result of their life history, needs, expectations and experience.⁴

For young people, **the fear of being regarded as gay or lesbian** and stigmatized as a result is a major source of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation.³



1. Michel Dorais, *De la honte à la fierté, 250 jeunes de la diversité sexuelle se révèlent* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2014).
2. *Combattre l'homophobie, Pour une école ouverte à la diversité* [French only]. An initiative by the Minister-President of the French Community of Belgium, accessed October 3, 2014, <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=25938&id=4851>
3. Irène Demczuk, *Démystifier l'homosexualité, Ça commence à l'école*, teaching guide (GRIS-Montréal, 2011).
4. LGBT Family Coalition, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.familleslgbt.org>
5. Michel Dorais, *Éloge de la diversité sexuelle* (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1999).
6. Léger Marketing, Fondation Émergence, *Sondage d'opinion auprès des Canadiens, Le virus Web de l'homophobie* (2013).

IMPACT ON STUDENTS

Briefly put, boys who are different from other boys and girls who are different from other girls, in terms of their choices, preferences, leisure activities or appearance, suffer as a result of the hostile attitudes or behaviour directed against them.



HOMOPHOBIA: A PROFILE OF BOTH SIDES OF THE EQUATION

It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that, **at some point, all students will become victims of heterosexism** in our society, either because of their own sexual orientation or that of a family member or friend, or because of their gender non-conforming interests, appearance or leisure activities. The list below, prepared by teachers, presents the characteristics most likely to trigger homophobia among students, along with a profile of the students who are most likely to become homophobic.¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS MOST LIKELY TO BECOME VICTIMS OF HOMOPHOBIA

- Lack of self-confidence, shyness and timidity
- Overly aggressive temperament (girls) or not aggressive enough (boys)
- Group of friends of the opposite sex
- No friends or isolation
- Lack of interest in sexuality
- Delicate physical appearance (boys)
- Late puberty (boys) (no body hair, voice not broken)
- Harsh gestures (girls) or delicate gestures (boys)
- Gender non-conforming clothes
- Gender non-conforming skills (e.g. art for boys)
- Intellectual abilities (boys)
- Sense of refinement (boys)

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS MOST LIKELY TO ADOPT HOMOPHOBIC ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIOUR

- Aggressive or “macho” behaviour
- Family context that is conservative and closed to or ignorant of sexual diversity
- In search of their own identity and insecure about their own sexual orientation
- Significant need for recognition
- In search of power and social status
- Behavioural disorders

1. Alain A. Grenier, *Jeunes, homosexualité et école, Enquête exploratoire sur l'homophobie dans les milieux jeunesse de Québec* [electronic document, French only] (GRIS-Québec, 2005), accessed October 2, 2014, http://www.colloquehomophobie.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/54_Jeunes_homosexualite_ecoles.pdf

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF INFORMATION AND PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

As teachers or school staff members, a few simple words may be all you need to help prevent homophobia and fight sexual stereotyping.

Provide everyday support for the students:

- In the classroom, in every situation, be aware of any sexual stereotypes conveyed in the materials used (e.g. in pedagogical guides, examples, stories) and make sure you address them (e.g. Can boys do ballet too? Can girls be construction workers too?).
- Promote an open attitude to and acceptance of difference by developing the students' self-esteem, listening skills and empathy (see page X of this Guide: Listening: Theory and Empathy: Theory).

In daily classroom activities, make the students aware of the following pejorative terms:

fairy, queer, poof, queen, limp-wristed, effeminate, faggot, fruit, drag queen, butch, lesbo, tomboy, fruitcake

- Always intervene to make the students understand that terms such as these are unacceptable.
- Tell the students that the terms or the way they are used are hurtful for gay and lesbian people (or in more simple terms, for “men who like men” and “women who like women”), and that this type of language, used in this way, is always insulting:
 - *Remember that we don't use hurtful words in this school/classroom.*
 - *This word/expression isn't acceptable.*
 - *It's not acceptable to say: “It's so gay to . . .”*
 - *You may not have intended to be hurtful, but when you use the word “gay” to refer to something bad or stupid, that's exactly what you're doing.*
 - *What did you mean by that?*
 - *Do you know what “gay” means?*
 - *Do you understand why what you just said is hurtful?*
- Explain very clearly that insults like these can also be hurtful for students who have parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and so on who are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Always use inclusive language. This will help avoid the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and hence avoid heterosexism. For example:

- Use the term parent instead of dad or mom.
- Use the term couple or partners to avoid the assumption that all couples are composed of a man and a woman.
- Watch what you say in the classroom, and try to include different types of couples, families, boys and girls.

Most of what appears on this page was taken from the LGBT Family Coalition Web site (www.familleslgbt.org, accessed on October 8, 2014).

PROPOSED PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES

Homophobia and sexual stereotyping have NO place in our schools! includes two pedagogical activities aimed respectively at elementary and secondary schools. They can be used together or separately. The details and aims of the activities are set out below.

1 QUESTIONNAIRE

To access the questionnaire, go to www.homophobius.com and click on “EN,” then “YOUNG PEOPLE.”

What	- A questionnaire for elementary school students - The questionnaire includes information and explanations on the themes addressed, using age-appropriate terminology for the target students.
Aims	- To deconstruct the myths surrounding homophobia and sexual stereotyping - To help understand homophobia and sexual stereotyping - To promote an accepting, open attitude to diversity and difference
How	- An interactive online questionnaire (see the Web site address above), with “true or false” responses or choices
Support	- The questionnaire has been designed so that students can complete it with out help. However, students in the early years of elementary school may need help from a teacher or school staff member.
When	- Just before the learning scenario is presented (where applicable)
Duration	- Roughly 15 minutes
Where	- In the classroom or at home

2 LEARNING SCENARIOS

Note: There are five learning scenarios, each designed for a specific level (see *LEARNING SCENARIOS: DESCRIPTIVE TABLE*, on page 15).

2.1 INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY ON THE LEARNING SCENARIOS

What	- A presentation plan for an introductory activity on the learning scenarios (see page 16 of this Guide)
Aims	- To present the themes of homophobia and sexual stereotyping to the students - To define the notions of homophobia and sexual stereotyping, along with other related terms
Who	- An introductory activity for elementary school students - An introductory activity for secondary school students
How	- A presentation given to a group of students, using the presentation plan and visual tools for <i>Homophobia and sexual stereotyping have NO place in our schools!</i>
Support	- A teacher or school staff member
When	- Immediately before the learning scenario is presented to the class
Duration	- 15 to 20 minutes
Where	- In the classroom

2.2 LEARNING SCENARIOS

What	- Two learning scenarios for elementary schools and three for secondary schools, showing interactions between groups of students, followed by questions on the interactions, and on homophobia and sexual stereotyping - Possible answers for each question (see page 18 of this Guide)
Aims	- To deconstruct the myths surrounding homophobia and sexual stereotyping - To help understand homophobia and sexual stereotyping - To promote an accepting, open attitude to diversity and difference (see the descriptive table for the aims of each learning scenario)
Who	- Elementary and secondary school students (see the descriptive table for details of target classes for each learning scenario)

- How**
- The learning scenarios (in PDF) can be projected onto a screen or printed and handed out to the students. Go to www.homophobia.com and click on "EN," then "EDUCATORS."
 - We suggest that the scenarios be presented to the group as a whole, to promote discussion. However, they can also be used as individual exercises.
- Support**
- A teacher or school staff member
- When**
- Following presentation of the introductory activity on the learning scenarios
- Duration**
- The length of the activity may vary, depending on the discussions. We suggest at least one classroom period (roughly 50 minutes).
- Where**
- In the classroom
-

LEARNING SCENARIOS: DESCRIPTIVE TABLE

Target Cycles	Problems Addressed	Aims	Scenario Format
Elementary Cycles 1 and 2	Sexual stereotypes	- To make the students aware that sexual stereotypes exist - To make the students aware that people are free to make their own choices - To make the students aware of the impacts of judgments relating to sexual stereotypes (for the people being judged) - To make the students aware of the importance of being open to and respectful of difference - To tell the students about acceptable forms of behaviour toward difference	Presentation of children's drawings and dialogue
Elementary Cycle 3	Inappropriate use of terms related to homosexuality, not targeted at a specific student Sexual stereotypes	- To make the students aware of the meaning of certain homophobic terms - To make the students aware of the impacts these terms have (for everyone) - To make the students aware that sexual stereotypes exist - To make the students aware that people are free to make their own choices - To make the students aware of the importance of being open to and respectful of difference - To teach the students to react respectfully to difference	Cartoon strip
Secondary Cycles 1 and 2	Violence and bullying of a homosexual boy	- To make the students aware of the different forms of hostile behaviour and their impacts (mainly on LGBT students) - To make the students aware that people may have prejudices and may feel discomfort faced with difference - To make the students aware of the importance of being open to and respectful of difference - To teach the students to react respectfully to difference	Arrows containing insults and violent acts (aimed at a drawing of a homosexual boy)
Secondary Cycles 1	Hostile behaviour (related to the fear of being identified as homosexual) Prejudice and discomfort	- To make the students aware that people may have prejudices and may feel discomfort faced with difference - To make the students aware of the different forms of hostile behaviour and their impacts (on everyone) - To make the students aware of the importance of being open to and respectful of difference - To teach the students to react respectfully to difference	Sequences of three illustrations showing a situation, a student's thoughts and his or her reaction
Secondary Cycles 2	Sexual stereotypes Hostile behaviour Prejudice and discomfort	- To make the students aware that people may have prejudices and may feel discomfort faced with difference - To make the students aware of the impacts of judgments relating to sexual stereotypes (for everyone) - To make the students aware of the impacts of hostile behaviour (for everyone) - To make the students aware of the importance of being open to and respectful of difference - To teach the students to react respectfully to difference	Facebook interactions

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Aims:

- To present the themes of homophobia and sexual stereotyping to the students.
- To understand the notions of homophobia and sexual stereotyping.

What to do:

- Show the students the promotional poster for *Homophobia and sexual stereotyping have NO place in our schools!*
- Give the students a few minutes to examine the poster and read it.
- Ask the students what they see in and understand from the poster.
- Then ask the students to answer the following questions. Use the content below as a model to encourage discussion.

QUESTIONS

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Does *Homophobius* really exist?

- Yes and no. There's no living creature called *Homophobius*. On the other hand, there are people who correspond to the definition of the term, i.e. they are disrespectful of difference.

(Tell the students that the next activity [the learning scenario] will help them to identify ways of not being a *homophobius*.)

Why is *Homophobius* described as being a threatening species?

- *Homophobius* says hurtful things and behaves in a way that denigrates other people and makes them feel bad about themselves. This has a direct impact on their well-being at school.

Why is *Homophobius* described as a species threatened with extinction?

- Students and adults are increasingly open to difference. However, it would be even better if *Homophobius* were completely extinct; schools would be better places for adults and students alike if this were the case.

What type of words and terms does *Homophobius* use? What type of things does *Homophobius* do?

- All homophobic or violent words and actions (e.g. *fairy, butch, you're not a real girl or you're not a real boy, you're not normal*).

What are all these words and actions called?
(The answer is on the poster.)

- All these words and actions are hostile homophobic behaviour.
- Hostile behaviour includes physical, verbal and social aggression, or aggressive online behavior. It conveys disapproval or contempt. Hostile homophobic behaviour consists in **insulting** or **denigrating** people with different sexual orientations or people with gender non-conforming attitudes.

What is a sexual stereotype?

- Sexual stereotyping occurs when roles, behaviour or characteristics are attributed to someone based on their gender, without regard for who they are as individuals.

What is homophobia?

- Homophobia is a contemptuous attitude that denigrates homosexual people (girls who like girls or boys who like boys), and those who know or are related to homosexual people (parent, brother, sister, friend, etc.). Homophobia can also be directed at people who behave in a different way from others of their gender, i.e. those who do not look the same, or whose interests or activities are not the same, as those typically associated with boys (for a boy) or girls (for a girl).

What is a prejudice?

- A prejudice is a preconceived opinion based on a stereotype. Generally speaking, it is an unfavourable judgment made by an individual about someone he or she does not know, by assigning characteristics typical of the group to which the other person belongs.

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-
- End the activity by telling the students that they will be better able to understand the notions of homophobia, prejudice, hostile behaviour and sexual stereotyping by reading a learning scenario.
 - Also tell them that the learning scenario will help them understand the impact of *Homophobia* in school, and what they need to do to avoid becoming one.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: LEARNING SCENARIO – ELEMENTARY CYCLES ONE AND TWO

QUESTIONS

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Question 1

Is it possible for a girl and a boy to want the same job, like Jade and Edward?

- Yes. Girls and boys can want the same job; it depends on what they like to do and what their interests are. There are no occupations that are only for girls or only for boys. Some may attract more women, or more men, but all can be practised equally well by both women and men.

Question 2

In your opinion, is it okay to have interests that are different, to want to do different things, or to choose a different occupation than the other girls or boys?

- Yes. Everyone is unique. Preferences and interests aren't determined by the fact of being a girl or a boy. It's normal to have interests in common with other people of your gender, or with the people you know, but it's also normal to have completely different preferences and interests. It's important to remember that your preferences and interests can be influenced by many different factors. Family, relatives, parents and friends may or may not have an influence on who you become as an individual.
- Having preferences or interests that are different from those of other girls or boys doesn't mean you aren't a "real girl" or a "real boy." Every girl and every boy is unique. There are many different ways of being a girl or a boy!
- Because everyone is unique, it's important to respect the preferences and interests of your friends and classmates, regardless of whether or not you share them. People can differ in many ways: in what they like to eat, in what they like to play, in what they like to read, in the music they like to listen to We each have our own preferences.
- Because everyone is different, you can show interest by asking questions and not being judgmental. That way, you'll learn more about other people and be able to accept them as they are. You may also discover new interests, or maybe find someone who shares your interests. You'll almost never be the only person to like something.

Question 3

In your opinion, how does Jade feel when Esteban tells her she's weird because of her interests?

- Jade may be angry or hurt, or she may feel rejected or judged.
- Jade may be afraid to talk about her preferences and interests with other people, in case they judge her, or she may be afraid that other people will think she's weird and laugh at her.
- Jade may become less self-confident, and this may affect her self-esteem.
- Jade may be angry, but at the same time she may be proud of her preferences and interests, and may want to continue to talk about them.
- Jade may not be affected by Esteban's comments.

Question 4

What could happen if certain preferences or interests were considered acceptable only for girls or only for boys?

- Some people may be rejected or become victims of violence or bullying because they have different preferences or interests.
- Some people may think it isn't appropriate to have certain preferences or interests, and they may stop participating in a sport or activity they enjoy, just to be like other girls or other boys.

Question 5

What can I do if people make fun of one of my friends, just because my friend doesn't like the same things as other girls or boys?

- Take an interest in my friend's preferences and activities, ask questions, and ask my friend to talk about them and say why he or she enjoys them.
- Respect my friend's preferences and choices.
- Show empathy when my friend talks about people who are critical because his or her preferences are different from those of other girls or boys.
- Encourage my friend to do what he or she likes and enjoys.
- Encourage my friend to talk to an adult, at home or at school.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS: LEARNING SCENARIO – ELEMENTARY CYCLE THREE

QUESTIONS

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Question 1

What do words like “fairy” and “gay” mean?

- “Fairy” is a negative reference to the more feminine appearance of some homosexual men. Because these terms are intended to confer contempt, they are insulting to homosexual people, **regardless of whether or not they are targeting a specific person.**
- “Gay” is a term generally used to describe a homosexual man, but may also be applied to a homosexual woman. Although not negative in and of itself, it can still be insulting, depending on how it is used. For example, if it is used judgmentally or to refer to something unpleasant or undesirable, there is a clear implication that homosexuality is also unpleasant or undesirable.

Question 2

What adjectives could be used instead of “gay,” “queer” and “fairy” in the learning scenario?

- Useless
- Boring
- Unoriginal
- Ugly

Question 3

We’ve already talked about homophobia and hostile homophobic behaviour. Can you identify examples of hostile homophobic behaviour in this learning scenario?

- When Maud says it’s “gay” to be artistic and refers to Farid’s “fairy” project, she uses terms that present homosexuality in a negative light, and is therefore insulting toward homosexuals.
- **When Maud refers to Farid’s “fairy” project, she makes a judgment based on a sexual stereotype. She assumes that art and being artistic are more appropriate for girls. She also thinks that a boy who is interested in art is behaving like a girl, and infers that he is probably homosexual.**

Question 4

When we use terms associated with homosexuality to refer to something negative that we don't like, what message are we sending to our friends and classmates—for example, to a classmate whose father has a male partner, or to a friend whose older brother is homosexual?

- Using words associated with homosexuality, such as “gay,” “homosexual” and “lesbian,” in a negative way sends a disparaging message to homosexual people. It constitutes hostile homophobic behaviour, and is judgmental **even if the words are not aimed at anyone in particular.**
- **Homophobic comments are hurtful to the person they are aimed at, and also to other people who know and love someone (e.g. an uncle, aunt, neighbour or parent) who is homosexual.**

Question 5

How might Farid feel in this scenario?

- Sad, rejected, judged, etc.
- **Farid may feel his artistic talents aren't recognized, and may feel ignored as a result.**
- Farid may feel hurt or frustrated as a result of the clear implication that he is “less of a guy” because of his artistic talents.
- **Farid may be afraid to talk about his preferences and interests to other people, in case they judge him, or he may be afraid that other people will think he's weird and laugh at him.**
- Farid may become less self-confident and feel powerless, and this may affect his self-esteem.
- **Farid may feel trapped. If he responds, will his friends think he's really gay? If he says nothing, will his friends keep treating him as “gay”? He may not know what to do.**

Question 6

You can have preferences, interests and leisure activities that are different from those of most other boys or girls. Do you agree with this statement?

If so, why?

- Yes. Everyone is unique. Preferences and interests aren't determined by the fact of being a boy or a girl. It's normal to have preferences and interests in common with other people of your gender, but it's also normal to have completely different preferences and interests too.
- **Having preferences and interests that are different from those of other boys or girls doesn't mean you aren't a “real boy” or a “real girl.” Every boy and every girl is unique!**
- Because everyone is unique, it's important to respect the preferences and interests of your friends and classmates, regardless of whether or not you share them. If someone is different, you can show interest by asking questions and not being judgmental. This way, you'll learn more about them and be able to accept them as they are. Showing empathy means trying to understand another person without judging them.

SOCIAL SKILLS: PREVENTING HOMOPHOBIA AND FIGHTING SEXUAL STEREOTYPING

In society, sexual stereotypes and heterosexism are conveyed not only by the media but in everyday interactions too. Some students may be affected by the pervasive presence of the heterosexist discourse. For example, young lesbians, gays and bisexuals, and students who are questioning their sexual identity, may feel isolated, ignored or even excluded, since their personal situation (or this particular facet of their identity) is never acknowledged or valued by the people around them. The homophobic violence, rejection and insults that typically occur in the interactions of some students have negative consequences not only for the students who are their direct victims, but also for those who witness them—hence the need to focus on the students' social skills when attempting to prevent homophobia and fight sexual stereotyping. An individual's social skills strongly influence his or her relationships with other people, and actions and reactions toward them. By working on some of these skills, we can help students to develop a more open attitude and react respectfully to difference, regardless of whether there is a connection with homophobia and sexual stereotyping.

LISTENING: THEORY

Listening as a social skill involves not only hearing what someone says, but also listening to the person, being open, and **accepting the person as he or she is**, without judging. Listening is therefore the first step toward empathy.

Listening, homophobia and sexual stereotyping

- Difference related to sexual orientation or non-conformity with sexual stereotypes is intrinsically linked to identity. A student who is listened to and whose difference is accepted in a non-judgmental way will therefore feel a sense of self-worth about his or her identity and who he or she really is. This self-worth can then become a springboard for healthy fulfillment and healthy self-esteem.
- It is important to remember that it is okay to be uncomfortable with difference, and that students who are thrown off balance by difference and who react in a homophobic way also need the same type of acknowledgement. If someone truly listens to them, they may **feel less need to act out their discomfort or insecurity**, since it will have been acknowledged.
- The following steps should be suggested to the students:
 - Take time to think before you act.
 - Stop and reflect on how you feel about the person's difference, or about how he or she behaves, so as not to adopt an attitude that conveys disapproval or contempt.
- We suggest developing simple active listening techniques. For example, asking questions or reformulating what a classmate says in order to understand what they mean can help foster constructive discussion and create friendships.

EMPATHY: THEORY

What is empathy?

Empathy is the ability to perceive and understand another person's experiences. It involves putting oneself in the other person's shoes to understand what they feel, without being judgmental.

Empathy, homophobia and sexual stereotyping

- One way to help prevent homophobia and fight sexual stereotyping is to encourage students to develop their empathy, so that they will not adopt hostile behaviour. The impact of empathy can therefore be enhanced by working with students who exhibit hostile behaviour and those who are their targets. However, it is important to remember that some students may play both these roles at different times.
- Empathy **helps people to understand the impact their words and actions may have on others**. Students who develop empathy are **better able to understand the impact** of hostile homophobic behaviour on other people, regardless of whether or not they were the intended targets.
- It can be difficult to put oneself in someone else's shoes, especially when the other person is obviously different, as in the case of gender non-conformity or a different sexual orientation (and even when both people have many other things in common). It is not always easy to show empathy, but it is a skill that can be worked on and developed.
- It can be **difficult to be open to others if we ourselves feel oppressed or judged**. It may therefore be constructive to acknowledge a student's discomfort and resistance to difference, point out that such feelings are okay, and make a distinction between these reactions and unacceptable hostile behaviour.
- The following suggestions should be considered as a means of developing empathy in students:
 - **Question the student about the potential impact of his or her behaviour**. Where possible, make sure he or she has an opportunity to tell the other student how he or she feels, with adult support. This promotes respectful dialogue.
 - Ask the student how he or she would feel in the other person's shoes.

OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY: THEORY

In any approach designed to prevent homophobia and fight sexual stereotyping, it is essential that students learn openness, so that they can acknowledge, understand and accept difference and become aware of how it makes them feel. They will then be better able to react respectfully to difference. Openness to sexual diversity means not only tolerating difference but also accepting it, and conveying that acceptance by adopting respectful attitudes and behaviour.

Openness to diversity, homophobia and sexual stereotyping

- It is normal to react to difference. Before students can develop an open attitude, they must therefore begin by **being aware of their own reactions, thoughts, prejudices and feelings** about difference.
- Once they have accepted their own resistance and prejudice, students will feel less threatened and can begin to take an interest in the other person and his or her difference. By asking questions and showing empathy, they can not only understand the other person's difference, but also **get to know him or her as an individual, and not simply as someone who is different**. It then becomes easier to respect him or her as an individual, despite being uncomfortable or thrown off balance.

SELF-ESTEEM: THEORY

Germain Duclos¹ (2000) defines self-esteem as awareness of the value people ascribe to themselves in different spheres of life. It is influenced among other things by their connection with the people around them, their experience, and their successes and failures.

Self-esteem, homophobia and sexual stereotyping

- Self-esteem influences not only a student's behaviour toward others, but also his or her thoughts and reactions to difference. Good self-esteem allows students who are targets of hostile behaviour and those who adopt that behaviour to **react to difference in a more thoughtful way**. It also allows them to **express themselves peacefully and resist being influenced by others**. These are significant skills that will benefit all interactions between students.

1. Germain Duclos, *L'estime de soi, un passeport pour la vie* (Montréal: Éditions de l'Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 2000).

The following table presents the impact different types of self-esteem will have in interactions with other students:

A student with healthy self-esteem	A student with low self-esteem	A student with inflated self-esteem (often a camouflage for low self-esteem)
- asserts personal choices peacefully - expresses personal identity or difference peacefully - is emotionally stable - is less quick to react to comments or perceptions of other people - is not affected by the perceptions of others	- reacts more quickly to provocation, comments or perceptions of other people - uses confrontation or contempt - is more likely to react negatively to and be affected by heterosexist or homophobic remarks - conforms to the majority, is influenced by others	- finds it hard to accept criticism - finds it hard to accept share of personal responsibility - uses confrontation or contempt - finds it hard to take responsibility for personal actions - asserts personal identity or difference in a non-peaceful way

Différents, mais pas indifférents, Institut Pacifique.

In the specific context of preventing homophobia and fighting sexual stereotyping:

- Encourage students who use **respectful, inclusive language**.
- Remind students of the **impact their insulting remarks** may have on the other person's self-esteem, and intervene quickly if a student becomes violent.
- Encourage students who **value difference**.
- Encourage students who **assert any difference peacefully**.

REFERENCES

In Québec and throughout the world, there are countless resources on the subject of sexual diversity. We invite you to visit the following Web sites, which will not only refer you to other community resources available in Québec and elsewhere, but will also suggest readings, movies, textbooks and electronic resources designed for sexual minority members of all ages and the people around them, including teachers. Enjoy!

LGBT Family Coalition

<http://www.familleslgbt.org/>

Fondation Émergence

<http://www.fondationemergence.org/> (French only)

Gai Écoute

<http://www.gaiecoutte.org/> (French only)

GRIS-Montréal

<http://www.gris.ca/english/>

Centrale des syndicats du Québec

<http://www.diversite.lacsq.org> (French only)

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse

<http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/en/Pages/default.aspx>

Institut national de santé publique

<http://www.inspq.qc.ca/english/>

École en santé

<http://ecoleensante.inspq.qc.ca/mosaik.aspx> (French only)

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APPENDIX 1: TERMS

Fairy: A boy whose spoken and gestural language is more feminine than masculine (pejorative term).

Gay: A homosexual person.



NOTES

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