

Essential Standard	Clarifying Objective
6.ICR.2 Apply strategies and skills for developing and maintaining healthy relationships.	6.ICR.2.1 The impact of early sexual activity on physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

Materials Needed:

Appendix 1 – instructions for teacher of Puberty Walk

Appendix 2 – copy of The Horrors and Wonders of Adolescence

3x5 index cards, one for each student

Appendix 3 – copy of Boy, Things Sure Have Changed

Appendix 4 – copies of How Have Things Changed?

Developmental Characteristics of Middle School Students (See introductory section.)

Focus:

Option 1

Refer to the Teacher Background Information: Developmental Characteristics of Middle School Students, found in the introductory section of this manual.

Follow the instructions in Appendix 1 – Puberty Walk

Ask students:

- How did it feel if you were one of the students who were chosen to walk in the beginning of this activity? Explain to the class that this is how it feels to be the first boy or girl to experience the changes associated with puberty. Sometimes this person feels like the only one who is going through this and they wonder if they are normal.
- Who has the easier time being the “early bloomer,” girls or boys? (The boys because all the other students look up to them and are envious.)
- Who has the harder time being the “early bloomer,” girls or boys? (The girls because they are the tallest girl in their class which makes them taller than the boys and the development of breasts can make them self-conscious and they may also become the target of teasing.)
- Ask the students who were in the large group that walked together how it felt. Their responses will indicate that it felt more comfortable than being first or last. Emphasize that the group which goes through the changes at approximately the same time will feel more like they are normal, even though they may be a little unsure or uncomfortable about these changes individually.
- How did it feel if you were one of the students chosen to go last in this activity? Explain to the class that this is how it feels to be one of the last girls or boys to experience the changes associated with puberty. Sometimes this person wonders if there is something wrong with them or if they are “normal.”
- Who has the easier time being the “late bloomer,” girls or boys? (Girls)
- Who has the harder time being the “late bloomer,” girls or boys? (Boys because they will be quite a bit shorter than the majority of their peers and may also be made fun of like the “early bloomer” girls.)

Explain to the class that individual students begin the changes associated with puberty at different times. Emphasize that it is normal for them to wonder if they are normal. Explain that sometimes peers make fun of the ones who either start the changes early or are the last ones to begin the changes. Remind them that they will all wonder at one time or another if they are normal and that they should be more understanding now that they know it is expected.

Option 2

Refer to the Teacher Background Information: Developmental Characteristics of Middle School Students, found in the introductory section of this manual.

Read the Horrors and Wonders of Adolescence (Appendix 2). Explain to the class that all of the variability in changes is normal. Individual students begin the changes associated with puberty at different times. Emphasize it is normal for them to wonder if they are normal. Reiterate that they and these changes are normal. Just as there are changes they may not enjoy, some of these changes will be exciting.

Review:

Refer to the Teacher Background Information: Developmental Characteristics for Middle School Students found in the introductory section of this manual.

- A. Ask students if they know what the words puberty and adolescence mean.
Puberty is described as the period of time during which reproductive capacity begins. Secondary sex characteristics include girls experiencing physical changes that make them look more like adult women (hips broaden, breasts develop). Boys begin to look like adult men including broader shoulders, deeper voices, and facial hair. Adolescence is the time of life between childhood and adulthood.

- B. Divide the class into two groups. One group will represent the physical changes of a female and the other group will represent the physical changes of males. Give the group responsible for “physical changes in females” pink slips of paper. Give the group responsible for “physical changes in males” blue slips of paper. On these slips of paper, the students are to write as many physical changes that their gender goes through during puberty. Once each group is finished, they will tape their slips of paper on a life-size laminated picture of a male and female. Review the physical changes that boys and girls go through, the similarities, and differences (see notes).

Statement of Objectives:

Today we will be discussing some of the challenges and changes in relationships that you may experience as you go through puberty and adolescence. By the end of the lesson, you will be able describe transitions and challenges and how to deal with them in a positive way.

Teacher Input:

Before class, on 3x5 index cards, write “agree” on one side and “disagree” on the other side. Make a card for every student in the class and give one to each student. Tell students you are going to read several statements (changes adolescents may experience during puberty) and the students are to decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement. Once they decide, they need to hold up the card so their choice can be seen. Follow each statement with a discussion to elaborate why they agree or disagree.

1. *It is normal for teenagers to care about how they look. (Agree)*
Many teenagers will agree with this statement because during puberty they become more self-conscious about their looks and how other people look at them. Most teens want to be “in style” with the type or brand of clothes they wear. Some have acne from time to time and this concerns them because they think that everyone will notice. Adults sometimes forget the significance of how important it is to be accepted by peers and how it feels to be teased.
2. *It is normal for teenagers to want more freedom or independence. (Agree)*
Yes. Teenagers feel like they are stuck between childhood and adulthood. Most teens do not want to be treated like children, but they are not ready for total independence. This is the time when teens sometimes experience conflicts over being able to attend ballgames, parties, or movies with their friends. However, it is also important for you to show your parents that you are trustworthy during this time. This will make your parents feel more confident about allowing you to experience more freedom.
3. *It normal for teens to go against what their friends are doing. (Disagree)*
Most teens seek peer acceptance and want to be involved in group activities. Sometimes friends make decisions to do risky things, such as experiment with drugs, and this is one of the reasons why our friendships may change during adolescence and throughout life. You may have been best friends since kindergarten, but you may have to decide if remaining their friend is the healthiest choice you can make.
4. *It is normal for teenagers to have girlfriends/boyfriends. (Agree)*
This is true because during puberty it is normal to develop interests in sexual and romantic attractions. These are changes and challenges that you will face during your teen years. Most of the time, these relationships are not long term, but it does give young people an opportunity to decide the type of person and the qualities that are important in a relationship.
5. *Is it normal for teenagers to want to spend time with their friends? (Agree)*
Most teens do want to spend more and more time with their friends. Your friends are important to you. You are probably in a new school this year with new peers that attended a different elementary school. As you meet new people and become involved in different activities, you may develop new

friendships and maybe even drift away from old friends. Friends are important because they are experiencing many of the same challenges and problems that you are facing and talking to them may be helpful.

Guided Practice:

Bring the class back to small groups. Read the story, Appendix 3 - Boy, Things Sure Have Changed. Give each group a copy of the questions in Appendix 4 – How Have Things Changed? Ask each group to work together to answer the questions about the story.

Discuss with the class the group's answers. (Refer to the Teacher Background Information found in the introductory section of this manual.) Emphasize the normalcy of the changes in the relationships that can occur during puberty.

Independent Practice:

Journal Writing: Have each student answer the following questions in their journal/notebook:

- *What are some of the changes you have experienced so far?*
- *Have some of your relationships changed? If they have, explain how they have changed.*
- *What do you think is the biggest challenge you will have during your teen years?*
- *Write a letter to a younger student who has not experienced the changes associated with puberty. Give this student advice or suggestions on how to deal with these changes.*

Closure:

Today we have discussed some of the changes that you may experience during adolescence. You should now be able to describe some of these challenges and hopefully deal with these changes in a positive way.

PUBERTY WALK

Explain to your class that the next activity is very simple but requires close attention to instructions. The most important rule is that they must be absolutely quiet during the activity – no talking allowed until it is over!

Have them form a group on one side of the room and explain that you will come into the group and tap someone lightly on the shoulder. When they are tapped, they should walk slowly across the room to the other side and turn around to face the original group. Demonstrate for them the slow, even pace you want them to use. Be sure to ask if there are any questions before you begin.

There is no rhyme or reason to how as the teacher selects who is tapped. In fact, that is part of the lesson! The basic guidelines are these: The first person tapped should walk alone for most or all of the way, then send one more person, then perhaps two close together. Remember, you are trying to visually demonstrate pubertal development, so a few people will “go it alone” and then a fairly large middle group should go together or very close together. Repeat your pace and selection from the beginning of the activity at the end – a few people will be last. You should save the last person to walk slowly alone across the floor to the group, which will be waiting somewhat impatiently, no doubt. Usually, the group cheers the final “loner.”

As you probably remember, the processing/learning from this activity is easy to facilitate. Ask the person who went first what it was like. They will say things like, “I felt weird! Everybody was watching me. I was wondering why I went first?” Ask the people who went as a group how they felt. They are usually the most comfortable and say things like, “I was glad I didn’t go alone.” Ask the first loner how he or she felt when other people started arriving at the other side of the room. He or she will say, “Relieved! I felt less singled out. It was good to have other people with me.”

Ask the “stragglers” how they felt. Usually they will say things like, “I wondered why you weren’t picking me.... Why other people got to go and I got left behind.” Ask how they felt when they were finally tapped. Check in with the last person. How did he or she feel? You can imagine the response! They usually say they were relieved to be tapped but it was agonizing walking slowly across the floor knowing everybody was waiting for you. “I just wanted to hurry up and get over there!”

Tell the group the name of this activity. Explain that many of the feelings they expressed are the feelings people can have during puberty. Going first is embarrassing, not really fun. You want other people to get going. When you develop at the same time with a larger group, you may feel more “normal” though it still is not easy. Being the last is tough, too. You get the idea!

THE HORRORS AND WONDERS OF ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence can be the most horrible time of your life.

Like when, if you're a boy, people call your house and you answer the phone and they say "Hello, Mrs. Cosby?" because they think it's your mother. (At some point this embarrassment will be over, of course. Your voice will drop – often cracking in the process.)

Like when, if you're a girl, no matter what happens, you just don't seem to be the right shape, and all the exercises you try with your door locked just make you tired.

Like when your parents want their "little baby" home from the school dance before it's dark outside, but the dance doesn't start until eight o'clock.

On the other hand, adolescence can be the most exciting time of your whole life. It's usually the time when:

You have a best friend. The two of you are so important to each other that you have to spend at least an hour on the phone together right after school telling each other all the things you forgot to tell each other coming home on the bus.

It can be a time when suddenly it seems as if the sun is setting just for you. Because of that, sunsets can be more beautiful than they've ever been before.

Adolescence is a time of life when you really begin to think about who you are and who you want to be. This is normal. Try this simple exercise:

Stand in front of a full-length mirror. Say to the mirror: "Who am I? Who have I been in the past? Who will I become? What do I like or dislike about myself?"

If your mirror does not give you some very good answers within five minutes, it may be defective.

Adolescence is a time of the most incredible range of feelings. One moment you're up. The next moment you're down. You may even feel sometimes that someone or something else is in control of your feelings – not you. This gets back to all the physical changes in your body. In addition to all the other changes, adolescence is a time of great emotional change. All of these changes are normal.

Boy, Things Sure Have Changed

Dawn and Hector have gone to school together since first grade. They are really good friends and often played together. They even live in the same neighborhood. Their families often do things together, such as picnics and camping trips.

Things sure have changed since they started middle school.

Hector has recently been going to the gym after school, reading weight lifting books, and lifting weights to build up his muscles. Hector likes to play soccer and basketball with Sam and Sonny in his spare time. He plans to try out for the school team next year. Hector spends less time with Dawn now than he used to and more time with Sonny.



Dawn spends a lot of time in the bathroom looking in the mirror, fixing her hair, putting on make-up, and taking showers. Dawn tries on just about everything in her closet every morning trying to decide what to wear to school. Just last year, she hated showers and did not care what her hair or clothes looked like. Now things are different. She wants to fit in with the other girls at school.

Dawn's best friend Samantha still thinks boys are yucky. However, Dawn has taken an interest in Hector. Samantha thinks that is the most disgusting thing she has ever heard. So now, Dawn feels uncomfortable talking to Samantha about Hector so she begins talking to Shelby, a new classmate, about him. Dawn begins inviting Shelby over to do things. Dawn and Samantha are beginning to drift apart.



This past weekend, Hector and Dawn's families were going camping. Neither one of them wanted to go because they wanted to go the movies with some of their friends. Camping used to be an activity that Dawn and Hector to beg their parents to do on the weekends.

Boy, things sure have changed.

How Have Things Changed?

1) What are some changes that Dawn has experienced?



2) What are some changes that Hector has experienced?

3) Do you have some advice for Samantha about what has happened to her friendship with Dawn?

4) Two of Dawn's friendships have changed. Do you have any advice for her?

5) What could have caused the relationship between Hector and Dawn's to change?

6) Are these changes in relationships during adolescence normal? If so, how? If not, why?