

More Than Friends: Understanding Romantic Relationships

NJ 2020 PERFORMANCE EXPECTATION ALIGNMENT:

2.1.8.SSH.5 – Analyze the similarities and differences between friendships, romantic relationships and sexual Relationships.

2.1.8.SSH.8 – Identify factors that can affect the ability to give or perceive consent to sexual activity (e.g. body image, self-esteem, alcohol, other substances).

TARGET GRADE: Grade 6 **TIME:** 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Handout: “Olivia and Dylan Case Study” – one per every three students
- Handout: “Aaron and Sophie Case Study” – one per every three students
- White board
- White board markers of at least two different colors
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe at least two characteristics of a friendship, and two characteristics of a romantic relationship. [Knowledge]
2. Identify at least two similarities and two differences between friendships and romantic relationships. [Knowledge]
3. Define consent. [Knowledge]

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1: Tell the students that you are going to be talking about different kinds of relationships. Divide the class into groups of 3, and as they are getting into their trios, walk around and distribute one copy of the case study, “Aaron and Sophie,” to each trio. (3 minutes)

STEP 2: Once everyone has gotten settled, ask for a volunteer to read the story aloud to the class. Tell them that they will have about 10 minutes to answer the questions on the worksheet as a group. Ask them to decide who in their group will be the recorder, and have that person put all three group member names on the top of the sheet.

(12 minutes)

STEP 3: When students seem to be close to finishing, distribute the second case study, “Olivia and Dylan.” Ask for a different student to read that story aloud. Ask the students to, once again, have their recorder write the group names on the top of the sheet, and then discuss and respond to the question. They will have 10 more minutes to work on that sheet.

(12 minutes)

STEP 4: After 10 minutes have passed (or the students have finished working), say, “Let’s start with Aaron and Sophie. What kind of relationship would you say this is?”

Students will likely say, “friends”, or “friendship”, or “best friends;” write “friendship” on the board. Ask, “How do you know this is a friendship?” Probe for the actual characteristics. For example, someone might say, “Because they’re really close?” Ask, “How do you know they are close? What about what you read here shows they are close?” Ask the students to read their responses from their worksheets. Facilitate the discussion for these possible responses, proposing them if they are not mentioned:

- Talk about a lot of things
- Spend a lot of time together
- Are honest, even when it’s hard to be
- Fight but make up
- Stick up for each other
- Support each other by going to each others’ events
- Feel jealous

Once the list is created, go through each, asking the students which they’d consider to be positives, and which negatives. Put + signs and – signs next to the various characteristics accordingly. If there is disagreement, put both a plus and a minus sign, and talk about how/why each could be positive or negative. Discuss when something that seems to be a positive can turn into a negative, such as spending too much time together, or are honest in ways that end up being hurtful.

(6 minutes)

STEP 5: Next, say, “Now let’s look at Olivia and Dylan. What kind of relationship would you say this is?”

Students will likely say, “a relationship” or “boyfriend/girlfriend.” Write the words, “Romantic Relationship” on the board. Ask the students to share the characteristics from their worksheet that describe this romantic relationship and write them beneath the words “Romantic Relationship.” Facilitate the discussion for these possible responses, proposing them if they are not mentioned:

- Have their friends talk for them rather than speaking directly
- Spend a lot of time together
- Get jealous
- Feel they have the right to do/know certain things (e.g., checking the other person’s phone)
- Make assumptions about what the other person is feeling
- Kiss and do other sexual things
- Find creative ways of getting noticed

Once the list is created, again go through each, asking the students which they’d consider to be positives, and which negatives. Put + signs and – signs next to the various characteristics accordingly. If there is disagreement, put both a plus and a minus sign, and talk about how/why each could be positive or negative. Discuss when something that seems to be a positive can turn into a negative, such as spending too much time together, or checking up on the other person nonstop.

(6 minutes)

STEP 6: Ask the students to look at the two lists and tell you what they notice about them. Depending on what is generated, they may notice similarities or differences. For the characteristics on both the positive and the negative lists that are similar, circle them in the same-color whiteboard marker. **Once they have this visual, ask the following questions:**

- **“What do you think are the main differences between a friendship and romantic relationship?”**
- **How do you know when you’re in a friendship or romantic relationship? Does something sexual have to happen? Or can you have a boyfriend or girlfriend without doing any of that?**
- **Do you think it’s easier having a friend or a boyfriend/girlfriend? Why? If there are these [indicate the list on the board] similarities, how is being in one kind of relationship different from the other?”**

(8 minutes)

STEP 7: “Now we are going to discuss consent, which is an important skill to not only understand but be able to do in any situation. In the last case study, Dylan didn’t consent to Olivia being at his house while his mom wasn’t home, but she went over anyway. I’m going to place you into six large groups. I will distribute a marker and a piece of chart paper to each group and ask that you all write as many answers as you can think of to your assigned sentence prompt as you possibly can. We will then come together as a group to share.”

Distribute the Consent: It Goes With Everything prompts so each group has a different prompt:

- “Consent is...”;
- “Consent is not...”;
- “You know for sure someone has given consent when...”;
- “It can be hard to know if someone has given consent when...”;
- “A person needs to get consent when...”;
- “If a person does not get consent before doing something, the following consequence can happen...”

Allow the groups about 5 minutes to list as many answers as possible on their paper. While the students are completing the activity, write the six sentence prompts on the board in order to tape the chart paper under each prompt.

As groups finish, tape their chart paper of answers under their assigned prompt and review as a large group. **Afterwards say, “These are great explanations as to what consent is and isn’t, what it looks like to receive or not receive consent, and what could happen if a person does not receive consent but continues anyway. Consent in general is giving someone permission to do something. Parents give consent for students to go on field trips, artists give consent for their work to be displayed, people give consent for their phone numbers to be published. But consent is also a situation where a person asks permission to interact with another person’s space or body.**

What we are looking for is affirmative consent where unless the other person provides a complete yes the answer is no. This means that silence, not saying no, or saying maybe would all be a NO to the request. You always have a right to say “No” when someone wants to enter your personal space, touch you, hug or kiss you or any other type of physical interaction. No one should do any of these things without your consent. What would you do if anyone ever did these things to you without your consent (tell a trusted adult)?”

(15 minutes)

STEP 8: Say, “People tend to think of friendship and romantic relationships as really different – but as you just saw, there are some similarities, too. The question for everyone to think about is, would you expect a romantic partner to behave in ways – aside from sexually – that a friend wouldn’t, or vice versa? Are there things you’ve learned from being in a friendship – such as being able to talk about what’s going on – that you can use in your relationships?”

Explain the Home-School Connection Activity and distribute it to students, recommending that they complete it and return it next class. (3 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Having the students put all the group members’ names on both case studies and collecting them will fulfill the first learning objective. The large group discussion after the small group work will help teachers assess the achievement of the second learning objective. The homework assignment will help to address both.

HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION ACTIVITY:

“Relationships on TV” – instruct the students that they are to watch a tv show that has both friendships and romantic relationships depicted and write about the kinds of relationships they see, how they know which type they are, and any similarities/differences.