

# Making Sense of Puberty

*A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum*

*Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.*

## NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 5th grade, students will be able to:

**PD.5.CC.1** – Students will be able to explain the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during puberty and adolescence.

**PD.5.SM.1** – Students will be able to explain ways to manage the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty.

**PD.5.CC.2** – Students will be able to explain how the timing of puberty and adolescent development varies considerably and can still be healthy.

**PD.5.AI.1** – Identify medically-accurate information and resources about puberty and personal hygiene.

**PD.5.AI.2** – Identify parents or other trusted adults of whom students can ask questions about puberty and adolescent health issues.

**PD.5.INF.1** – Describe how friends, family, media, society and culture can influence ideas about body image.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 4 Lesson 1

**TIME:** 40 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- 3 Pre-titled newspaper sheets as described
- Teacher's Guide: "Changes of Puberty" – one copy
- Answer Key: "Changes of Puberty" – one per student (to be distributed at the end of class)
- Homework: "Remaining Questions" – one per student
- Handout: "Learning About Puberty Resources" – one per student
- Markers/chalk
- Flipchart paper or chalkboard/dry erase board
- Masking tape
- Extra pencils in case students do not have their own
- "Changes of Puberty" - one copy cut into strips

## ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

Take three sheets of newspaper. On the top of the first write, "Physical," on the top of the second write, "Social," and on the top of the third write, "Emotional." Post these at the front of the room with another blank sheet over each to hide what is written there.

Have approximately 30 one-inch pieces of masking tape pre-torn and partially stuck to the board or a desk at the front of the room to save time during the activity. Cut the "Changes of Puberty" sheet along dotted lines to form strips.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Describe at least three changes that take place during puberty. [Knowledge]
2. Differentiate between what could be considered physical, social and emotional changes of puberty. [Knowledge, Skill]
3. Explain one thing they can do to manage a physical, emotional and a social change of puberty. [Knowledge, Skill]
4. Identify at least one reliable, accurate source of information about puberty. [Knowledge, Skill]

## PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Tell the class that you are going to be talking about puberty today. Say, "Puberty is something everyone goes through starting at around your age and over their teen years. It has to do with all the ways our bodies change to prepare us for becoming adults. This includes how we change emotionally – and socially – as well as physically."

Reveal the three flipchart sheets and say, "Most people know something about the physical changes of puberty – what our bodies go through. But there are also emotional changes – ways in which we change that has to do with our feelings. And there are also social changes – ways in which we change based on the people we spend the most time with. We are going to do an activity now that looks at these changes."

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Divide the group into pairs. Once they are in their pairs, say, “I am going to give each pair two sheets of paper. On each sheet of paper you will see one of the changes of puberty. Please decide whether each one is a physical, an emotional or a social change of puberty. Once you have decided, bring your sheets up to the front of the room, take a piece of tape, and stick it on the sheet you’ve decided they go on.”

Answer any questions, and then distribute two slips from Changes of Puberty to each pair. Tell them they have 5 minutes in which to decide and bring their sheets up to the front of the room and place them on the correct list. (7 minutes)

*Note to the Teacher: If you have a larger class, you may wish to break the students into groups of 3 as needed. As you distribute the sheets, try to mix them up so that the pairs/groups receive sheets that go on different lists when you can.*

**STEP 2:** Tell the students you are going to go through each characteristic on the physical changes of puberty to make sure everyone agrees that it is on the correct flipchart sheet. As you do this, provide the information described in the Teacher’s Guide: Changes of Puberty through the physical changes.

*Note to the Teacher: As you go through the information with the students, emphasize whenever possible that the changes you are discussing are all normal, but some people go through them sooner than others and this is also normal. (12 minutes)*

**STEP 3:** Say, “Since we just did the physical aspects, we are now going to do social and emotional changes.” Once done, double check the social and emotional changes against the answer sheet, and if anything is incorrect, move the misplaced characteristic to the correct newsprint sheet. Then tell the class that they will be talking about the social and emotional changes – and how they can deal with these changes. Say, “Managing the physical changes is pretty straight-forward – if you have acne, you can use medicine to help make it go away; if a girl has her period, she can manage that with different products. But there isn’t medicine or other products to help with the social and emotional stuff. So how do we deal with those changes?” (2 minutes)

**STEP 4:** Break the class into new pairs or groups of 3. Distribute one of the social or emotional changes to each group by taking the individual sheets from the newsprint at the front of the room and handing them to the groups. Ask the students to read what is there, and to come up with three suggestions for how kids going through puberty can manage these. Tell them they will have about 8 minutes to work on this. (9 minutes)

**STEP 5:** Call time. Ask for one group that had a social change to read what was on their sheet and report back what ideas they came up with for managing that change. Then ask a group that had an emotional change to read what was on their sheet and report back what they came up with. With each presentation, ask the rest of the class for their reactions, and whether they have anything they would add. (8 minutes)

**STEP 6:** Explain that there is a lot of additional information about puberty they need to know. Distribute the answer key with the physical, social and emotional changes of puberty. Then pass out and explain their homework, along with the “Learning About Puberty Resources” handout they are to bring home, share with their parent(s)/caregiver(s), and keep handy if they have questions in the future and want to find the answers out for themselves. Tell the students that the homework is due the next class. (2 minutes)

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### **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:**

The sorting activity will meet the first learning objective while their small group work will meet the second and third learning objective. The homework will meet the fourth learning objective.

### **HOMEWORK:**

Ask students to complete the worksheet, “Remaining Questions” and return it during your next class session. Explain that the assignment involves both watching a short animated video and then selecting a parent or trusted adult to have a conversation with.

**Get taller**

**Grow breasts**

**Weight gain**

**Grow hair under  
arms, on legs,  
around genitals**

**Get acne**

**Hair texture  
may change**

**Hormones are  
raging**

**Voice deepens**

**Spontaneous  
erectiions**

# Menstruation

**Wet dreams**

**Hips widen**

**Voice cracks**

# Muscle growth

**sweat starts  
to smell**

**May want to  
try more and  
riskier things**

**More  
interested in  
being with  
friends**

**May have more  
conflict with  
parents**

**Start to become  
interested in others/  
as more than friends/  
finding boyfriends,  
girlfriends**

**Peer pressure  
increases**

**Mood swings –  
feel great one  
minute, and then  
really sad or angry  
the next**

# **Anxiety and stress**

**Intense  
feelings**

**Feel self-  
conscious about  
how your body  
looks**

**Might have hard  
time making up  
your mind/feel  
unsure a lot**

**Feel “paranoid” –  
everyone’s looking  
at/talking about you**

**Might start thinking,  
“Who Am I?” – try  
to define yourself as  
a person**

## Changes of Puberty

### Answer Key

#### PHYSICAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

Get taller

Grow breasts

Weight gain

Grow hair under arms, on legs, around genitals

Get acne

Hair texture may change

Hormones are raging

Voice deepens

Spontaneous erections

Menstruation

Wet dreams

Hips widen

Voice cracks

Muscle growth

Sweat starts to smell

#### SOCIAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

May want to try more and riskier things

More interested in being with friends

May have more conflict with parents

Start to become interested in others as more than friends/finding a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Peer pressure increases

#### EMOTIONAL CHANGES OF PUBERTY

Mood swings – you feel great one minute, and then really sad or angry the next

Anxiety and stress

Intense feelings

Feel self-conscious about how your body looks

Might have hard time making up your mind/feel unsure a lot

Feel “paranoid” – everyone’s looking at/talking about you

Might start thinking, “Who Am I?” – try to define yourself as a person

# Learning about Puberty

## Handout

**Note to Parents/Caregivers:** *These resources all provide important, age-appropriate information about puberty and how our bodies change during this time. Please review these before sharing with your child so you feel ready to answer any questions they may have.*

### BOOKS

The “What’s Happening to My Body?” Book for Girls – Lynda Madaras

The “What’s Happening to My Body?” Book for Boys – Lynda Madaras

It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health – Robie H. Harris

The Amazing Life of Birds: The Twenty Day Puberty Journal of Duane Homer Leech – Gary Paulsen

American Girl: The Care & Keeping of You: The Body Book for Younger Girls

The Boys Body Book: Everything You Need to Know For Growing Up You

### WEBSITES

PBS Kids: It’s My Life: Puberty – <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/body/puberty/>

Healthy Kids from the American Psychological Association – <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/Pages/Whats-Happening-to-my-Body.aspx>

Kids Health from Nemours – [http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/body\\_stuff/puberty.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/body_stuff/puberty.html)

## Changes of Puberty

### Teacher's Guide

#### Physical

##### *Get taller*

- Everyone goes through puberty at different rates. This is totally normal.
- How tall you will be is determined a lot by genes – or whether your biological family members were tall or short or somewhere in between.

##### *Grow breasts*

- It is normal for one breast to be slightly larger than the other
- Girls typically develop breasts. Some boys, however, may temporarily develop breasts. This is called “gynecomastia,” and it can be very embarrassing and sensitive to boys. A lot of teasing and bullying can take place when this happens, which is completely inappropriate and wrong. Breast growth among boys usually goes away by itself.

##### *Weight gain*

- All young people gain weight during puberty. Sometimes this is due to physical growth; sometimes this is due to an increase in fat on the body. Both are completely normal.
- Many young people try to diet to lose weight during this time – and while it's always important to eat healthy food and exercise, a lot of the weight gain during puberty is temporary and evens itself out if you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

##### *Grow hair under arms, on legs, around genitals*

- For people with darker hair, this hair growth may be more pronounced.
- Some people choose to shave this hair, whether it's on the face, legs, under the arms or elsewhere. There is no medical reason to shave, it is only about personal preference. If shaving anywhere near your genitals, it's really important to be extra careful.

### *Get acne*

- During puberty, your body starts producing more oil. The oil and dirt that gets trapped in the pores can lead to pimples or more widespread acne.
- Pimples can appear on the face or other parts of the body, like the back or shoulders.

### *Hair texture may change*

- Not everyone experiences a change in hair quality during puberty, but many people do.
- Previously straight hair will sometimes become curlier or coarser; lighter hair may darken.

### *Hormones are raging*

- Hormones are the natural chemicals found in our bodies. We all have them, whether we are kids or adults.
- Hormones are responsible for all of the physical changes in puberty (as well as some of the emotional ones). During puberty, they're present at really high levels – but they even out a bit once puberty is done.

### *Voice deepens*

- This is more pronounced in boys. But kids of all genders may experience a deepening of their voice during puberty.

### *Spontaneous erections*

- When penises stand up by themselves it's called an "erection." This has been happening since infancy and is totally normal. But during puberty and beyond, it can happen more often and can be more noticeable. Also, the erections can last longer.
- During puberty, erections can happen out of nowhere, or spontaneously. They don't even have to be thinking about or looking at anything in particular. While this can be embarrassing they also tend to go away on their own after a short period.

### *Voice cracks*

- Sometimes, kids' voices will deepen dramatically, going from higher to lower. Other times, there will be a transition between the two where the voice cracks. This can sound funny, but it usually makes the person feel self-conscious. The cracking is temporary, and the voice will be lower at the other end of it!

### *Menstruation*

- One of the most dramatic changes a girl's body goes through is menstruating or getting her period. This is part of the normal monthly cycle where her body is

preparing for a possible pregnancy by building up a lining of blood and body tissue in her uterus.

- Once a month, one of her ovaries releases an ovum or egg. This is a tiny egg, it's not like a chicken egg! This means her body is preparing for when she is older and may want to get pregnant. If she has unprotected penis-vagina sex after the egg is released, that egg will meet with a sperm and then attach itself to the wall of the uterus. When that happens, she is pregnant. If a girl or woman is not pregnant, the lining in the uterus is no longer needed, so it and the tiny egg leave her body during menstruation or her period. This lasts 5 to 7 days. We will talk about this more in another class.

### *Wet dreams*

- When guys' bodies start producing semen – that's the fluid that comes out of their penises that contains sperm, which as you just heard can cause a pregnancy if it meets a woman's egg in her uterus – it's normal for this semen to come out while they sleep. This is called a "nocturnal emission" or a "wet dream."
- Some guys think they've wet the bed, but they haven't. It's perfectly normal, and will happen less and less frequently as they get older.

### *Hips widen*

- This happens to girls, and can range from subtle to more pronounced. It is completely normal.

### *Acne*

- Young people of all genders experience this at some point.
- Usually, this is an occasional zit here and there; sometimes it can be more serious. If you get a lot of acne, talk with a parent or caregiver about seeing a dermatologist (skin doctor).

### *Muscle growth*

- Although girls' bodies and muscles develop during puberty, the greatest amount of muscle growth happens to boys.
- Everyone is different, and even after puberty some boys may be more or less muscular.

### *Sweat starts to smell*

- Puberty is when we tend to see a big increase in how frequently kids shower or take baths. This is also when a lot of young people start using deodorant.

## Remaining Questions

### Homework

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Watch the following two videos about the changes of puberty.

Top Signs Girls are in Puberty: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6oka\\_hqMJk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6oka_hqMJk)

Top Signs Boys are in Puberty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onggxBVI4qw>

After watching these videos, write down up to three questions you still have about puberty in the space below. Next, identify and write the name of a parent/caregiver or other trusted adult from whom you could get this information. If possible, with this adult, share your remaining questions. Discuss with them additional resources/ sources of information (website, book, magazine etc.) from where you could also get this information.

Remaining questions about Puberty:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Name of parent/caregiver or trusted adult:

Additional resources/sources of information: