

# The World Around Me

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

*Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.*

## NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

**PD.8.INF.1** – Analyze how friends, family, media, society and culture can influence self-concept and body image.

**PR.8.INF.1** – Examine how alcohol and other substances, friends, family, media, society and culture influence decisions about engaging in sexual behavior.

**HR.8.INF.1** – Analyze the ways in which friends, family, media, society and culture can influence relationships.

**SH.8.INF.1** – Analyze the impact of alcohol and other drugs on safer sexual decision-making and sexual behaviors.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 8  
Lesson 2

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Scenario: Leah (enough two-sided copies for one quarter of the students in the class)
- Scenario: Malik (enough two-sided copies for one quarter of students in the class)
- Students' journals (or sheets of lined paper, one per student, if journals are not being used in class)
- White board and markers
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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

1. Name at least two people or entities from which young people receive messages about relationships and sexuality. [Knowledge]
2. Describe at least one message young people might receive about sex and sexuality from each of these sources. [Knowledge]
3. Explain how these messages can have an impact on a young person's sexual decision-making. [Knowledge, Skill]
4. Reflect on how examining these influences can have an impact on their self-concept and body image, which can affect their own sexual decision making in the future. [Knowledge, Skill]

## A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

## PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Introduce the topic by telling students, "When we make decisions about significant things in our lives, we rarely do so without considering the thoughts, experiences and messages we get from various sources in our lives. We ask people in our lives for their advice – and sometimes we get it even when we don't ask for it! Other times, we are barely aware of how outside messages do or don't have an influence on us and our decision-making."

Draw a large circle on the board, about 18" in diameter. On the top of the circle write a name that reflects the population of your students (for the purposes of this example, we will use "Matthew"). As you are drawing the circle and writing the name, "Matthew," or another name at the top, say, "Imagine for a moment that we have a teenager named Matthew. Even though he's still in school, he's thinking about what he wants to be when he grows up." In the center of the circle, write, "Career." Say, "He's really good at art and photography and is thinking

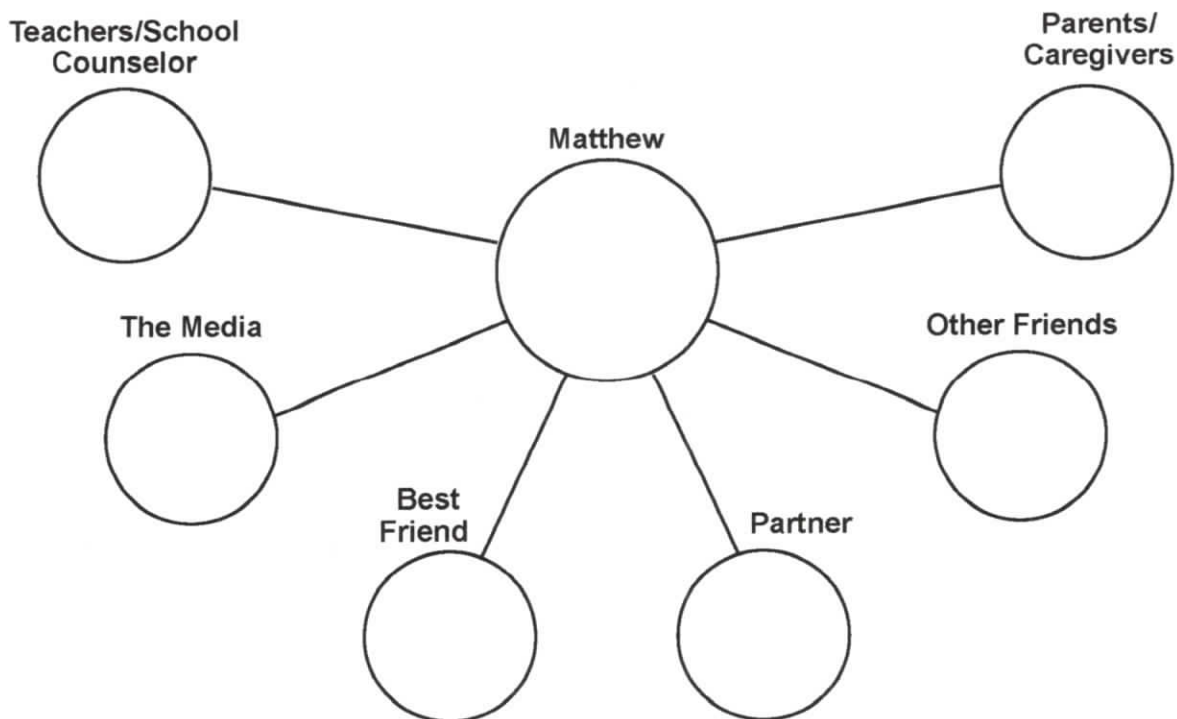
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he might want to make that his job. From what types of sources might he expect to receive messages about his future career choices?" Probe for the following:

- Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)
- Teachers or Counselors at School
- Other Family Members
- Professional Artists and Photographers
- The Media
- Partner
- Best Friend
- Celebrities

As students contribute a particular source, draw a line from the center circle to another smaller circle that you draw. Then write the category of person or source at the top as you did with the first circle. Depending on what is contributed, you should end up with something that looks similar to this:



Go through the examples and ask the class one message Matthew might hear from his parent(s)/caregiver(s) about this possible work choice. Probe for, "Great, go for it!" or "Don't do it, it's not practical." Write that example in the circle titled, "Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)." Go around the rest of the cluster and add in one message, positive or negative, that he might expect to hear from each possible source.



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Once you have put one example in each circle, ask the students to tell you what they notice about the messages, which may be consistent or inconsistent. Ask, "Has anyone ever asked more than one person for their opinions about something and gotten two totally different answers? If so, what does that feel like?" Probe for, "confusing," "overwhelming," "helpful," etc.

Ask, "So, whose opinions do you think will carry more weight with Matthew?" After a few responses, acknowledge what was shared and if it has not been shared already say, "It also depends on his relationship with each of these entities. If he is particularly close with someone, or has relied on their advice in the past and it's helped him, he may consider their thoughts more seriously than other people's." (13 minutes)

**STEP 2:** Say, "Now we are going to look at sexual decision-making and the people and entities that can have an impact on these decisions." Break the class into groups of four. Once they are in their groups, tell them they are going to work together on a scenario in which they'll have a character who they will be mapping as they did with Matthew. Distribute the Leah scenario to half the class and the Malik scenario to the other half. Let them know they will have about 15 minutes in which to do their work (17 minutes).

**STEP 3:** After about 15 minutes has passed, ask the groups to stop their work. Tell the students that half of groups worked on one scenario, and the other half on a different one. Ask for students from various groups that had the Leah scenario to read the scenario, alternating students for each paragraph. Ask groups to share the influences they noticed, and their responses to the questions asked.

Next, ask for students from the other groups who had the Malik scenario to read their scenario, alternative students with each paragraph. Ask groups to share the influences they noticed, and their responses to the questions asked. (14 minutes)

**STEP 4:** Acknowledge the work they did, and ask them to hand in their worksheets. Ask students to take out their journals and write the following questions on one of the pages (have these written on the board or write them as you speak):

1. "Who or what do I consider before making decisions about sexuality or relationships?"
2. "How might using alcohol affect how I make decisions about sexuality or relationships, and whether I stick to them?"
3. "How can thinking about people and messages around me help me with my future decisions about sexuality and relationships?"

Ask them to write a minimum of three sentences in response to each question and hand in their journals during the next class. (6 minutes)

*Note to the Teacher: If you are not using journals in class, feel free to have students write these prompting questions on a sheet of paper. You can also post or email an electronic version and have them complete these online and submit them to you once completed.*

\*\*\* Remember this lesson is designed for 13 year olds. All of the kids in these situations have friends who've had sex. They both have "conservative" parents who they can't talk to about sex. This is inaccurately and inappropriately stereotyping a child's parent. Why not say "a parent"? Why add "conservative"? Throughout many lessons they continually cause possible rifts between parent and child. This lesson is designed to teach 13 year olds how to decide to have sex.

## Leah

Leah has been with Malik for almost a year. Malik has been bringing up whether they should start having sex, and Leah's trying to figure out whether the time is right. She's never had sex before, and she's nervous about getting pregnant or an STD. Malik's had sex once before, but things didn't work out with them. Malik says he's curious, but that he's not sure whether the time's right – he's got a lot of plans for the future, and if he ends up getting Leah pregnant or either of them get an STD, that could really affect his hopes for college and getting a scholarship.

Leah's best friend has had sex, but he goes back and forth as to whether he thinks Leah should, saying, "I think it's different for guys." They hang out a lot and watch reruns of "16 and Pregnant," as well as "East Los High," and talk about all the people who have sex on those shows and what's happened as a result. Leah doesn't feel like she can talk with her mom about this stuff, because her mom was brought up in a pretty conservative household and they've never talked about sex or sexuality. Leah does, however, have a good relationship with her mom's best friend, who she's known since Leah was a baby, and feels like she can talk with her about anything.

Sometimes, when Malik gets stressed out or nervous, he drinks. When he does this, he gets a bit more assertive with Leah – as she tells her best friend, "he's all hands when he drinks." They've almost had sex a few times when he's gotten like this, but Leah's always told him to stop and he has. She loves Malik, she really does – she's just not sure whether the time is right or whether he's the one.\*\*\*

"Assertive" is an interesting choice of words. Particularly since the curriculum has a heavy focus on the idea that you can't just say "no" to sex. You need to be "assertive". So are they saying this drunk 13 year old boyfriend, whose "all hands when he drinks" is asking for sex appropriately?

### Instructions:

1. On the back of this sheet, map the influences in Leah's life by writing the message(s) she's getting from each in the circles provided.
2. Is anyone missing, even if they're not listed in the story? If so, add them in to the "other" circle and add in what possible messages she might get from them about her decision.
3. We found out that Malik drinks sometimes – how does that come into play when it comes to Leah's decision?

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4. Who or what do you think has a LOT of influence on Leah? Why?

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5. What does this tell you about making decisions about big things in your life, like sex and sexuality?

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# Malik

Malik has been with Leah for almost a year. Leah has been bringing up whether they should start having sex, and Malik's trying to figure out whether the time is right. He's never had sex before, and he's nervous about getting Leah pregnant or getting an STD. Leah's had sex once before, but things didn't work out with them. Malik's curious, but he's not sure whether the time's right – he's got a lot of plans for the future, and if he ends up getting Leah pregnant or if either of them get a really serious STD, that could impact his hopes for college and getting a scholarship.

Malik's best friend has had sex, and regularly asks Malik what he's waiting for. He's even asked Malik a few times whether he's hesitating because maybe he likes guys, not girls. Malik watches porn sometimes when he's home alone, and is nervous about whether he'll know what to do. Malik's parents are very devout Catholics, and they don't talk about sex or sexuality except to talk about abstinence and waiting for marriage. Malik is the youngest of four children, but his brothers and sisters are all older and don't live at home anymore. He only sees them at holidays and doesn't consider himself close to any of them. \*\*\*Again, stereotyping parents

Sometimes, when Malik gets stressed out or nervous, he drinks. That's when he feels most comfortable talking about sex with Leah – and when he feels like they're really close.

**Instructions:**

\*\*\* So is being drunk at 13-years old a good thing?

1. On the back of this sheet, map the influences in Malik's life by writing the message(s) he's getting from each in the circles provided.
2. Is anyone missing, even if they're not in the story? If so, add them in to the "other" circle and add in what possible messages he might get from them about his decision.
3. We found out that Malik drinks sometimes – how does that come into play when it comes to his relationship with Leah?

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4. Who or what do you think has a LOT of influence on Malik? Why?

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5. What does this tell you about making decisions about big things in your life, like sex and sexuality?

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\*\*\* I'm not sure this lesson provides any significant conclusions to this question. It seems like it may confuse 13 year olds more than help them. Additionally, are 13 year olds capable of giving consent? Not according to the law. In children, the brain stem, (which houses the pleasure centers of the brain) develops first. It's much later that the reasoning and decision-making abilities in the frontal cortex are fully developed. It's like driving without access to the break pedal. I don't think kids should be told that they are in charge of making the decision about having sex with a drunk and porn addicted boyfriend.