

Strategy 4: Use correct language

1. Which area(s) do you believe you could improve and why?

I would like to work on using correct and accurate terms in puberty education. This school year will be my first time teaching puberty and sex ed., so discussing these terms is new and may be uncomfortable for both my students and me!

2. What doable strategy can you use to address one of the six recommendations above?

One strategy I will use is to work with students to develop norms before we begin our sexuality unit, and make sure that using accurate terms is a class norm. I will also reassure students that if they only know a slang term, they may use it and I will do my best to explain the accurate term so that everyone can know it.

Another option that we can use as we move through the unit is to create a glossary of accurate puberty terms together--with each student completing his or her own sheet of notes--to make sure everyone is clear on language and there are not continuing disparities between students who already know a lot and those for whom puberty information is mostly new.

3. What is one challenge you foresee to implementing this strategy?

A challenge I foresee is certain students flouting the norms and using slang deliberately to make their peers laugh or be provocative. This could potentially derail the lesson and make students even more uncomfortable if they are not "in the know" about certain terms. With the glossary, I can imagine that it could cause us to get too bogged down in language or simply take too much time.

4. What is one way you might address that challenge?

This is tricky because I understand that students may want to use humor to deflect discomfort during our puberty unit. If a student were to violate the class norms and use slang terms, I would begin by asking them to restate their comment with the accurate term. If use of slang continued, I would probably pull the lesson back and work on a group brainstorm about the pros and cons of

slang terms, then see if the class needs to re-word the group norms based on our discussion (for example, we might agree to use slang for certain terms, such as “period” for menstruation, but terms that are considered disrespectful would not be included). Finally, if a student persisted in using slang, I would arrange a time to speak privately with the student to see if they have any particular concerns that are leading them to repeat slang throughout class.

If the glossary was proving to be a distraction, I might begin one class of the unit by allowing students to catch up on filling in their glossary. I could also provide them with a completed version, although I would ask them to recopy the definitions to help them stick, rather than simply reading them from the sheet I provide.