

What should be done about sex education in schools?

I. Definition of Terms

- A. Abstinence – refraining from having sex. (CDC)
- B. Adolescents – humans ages 10-19 experiencing physical and cognitive growth. (WHO)
- C. Contraceptive – a method of preventing unwanted pregnancy. (WHO)
- D. Comprehensive sex education – Includes medically accurate, age-appropriate information on sexual intercourse, sexual expression (i.e. healthy relationships, decision making, sexual orientation), as well as contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancy and STIs. (ACOG)
- E. Sex education – instructive teaching of topics relating to sex, such as puberty, relationships, and sexual health. (Planned Parenthood)

II. Analysis

The Problem – Comprehensive sex education is not a requirement in all of American education.

A. What is the history of sex education in schools?

1. By the year 1927, 45% of US schools presented sex ed to students by breaking down different aspects in relevant classes (i.e. anatomy in biology & relationships in psychology). (Lauren Lavin)
2. In the 1970's, support for sex ed became popular and arose from increased adolescent pregnancy and the global spread of HIV/AIDS (Guttmacher institute)
 - a) Between 1991 and 2015, birth resulting from teen pregnancy in the US dropped 64%. (NCSL)
 - b) On a global scale, transmission rates between 2010-2021 has been reduced by 32% for HIV, with HIV related deaths being reduced by 52%. (WHO)
3. In the 1980's, sex ed moved beyond preventing pregnancy and disease by incorporating the mental impacts of sex education (i.e. exploring healthy decision making and healthy relationships). (Peter Scales)
4. In the late 1990's, abstinence-only sexual education gained widespread support in legislature, receiving plenty federal funding. (Kantor et. Al)

5. In 2001, approx. half of student in grades 7-12 reported wanting more information on sexual violence, STD testing, and how to communicate concerns such as birth control with a partner. (Cynthia Dailard)

B. What is the cause of poor sex education?

1. This problem expands across the entire U.S. as state to state requirements for sexual education vary. (Guttmacher Institute)
2. The federal government does not fund any programs dedicated to providing comprehensive sex education. (Guttmacher Institute)
3. One out of four educators feel they are not providing their students with all the information needed to make informed decisions, due to the restrictions set forth in curriculum. (Cynthia Dailard)

C. What are the effects of the poor sex education on Americans?

1. There are many negative effects of improper sexual education on adolescents, including: (USC)
 - a) Being less likely to make informed, safe decisions regarding their sexual health.
 - b) Increased likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.
 - c) Unplanned pregnancies, especially among teens.
 - d) Being more likely to encounter issues relating to sexual consent and harassment.

D. How is sex education currently being implemented in the schooling system?

1. GOOD: As of August 1st, 2022, 38 US states and the District of Columbia require sex education and/or HIV education to be taught (Guttmacher Institute)
 - with 25 states and the DC mandating both.
 - 2 states requiring only sex ed
 - 11 states requiring only HIV education
 - BAD: 17 states require this education to be medically accurate
2. GOOD: Requiring information on contraception to be taught (Guttmacher Institute)
 - required in 20 states and DC
 - BAD: abstinence, and even abstinence until marriage, is taught in 39 states and DC
 - where 29 stress it, and 10 solely cover it

** By 2017, an approx. estimate of 55% of Americans engaged in sexual intercourse by age 18. (CDC)

** In a 2002 survey, 75% of Americans had had premarital sex by 20 years of age. (Lawrence Finer)

3. GOOD: 35 states and DC require healthy relationship skills to be taught. (Guttmacher Institute)

- 40 states and DC require dating and sexual violence to be addressed. (Guttmacher Institute)

- BAD: these numbers should read 50 across the board.

** States with the highest rates of rape include: Alaska, Arkansas, South Dakota, Michigan, Nevada per 100,000 occupants. (FBI) —> Where only Nevada requires sex education to be taught. (Guttmacher Institute)

E. Why is comprehensive sex education effective?

1. Decreases unwanted pregnancies and STIs among adolescents (Goldfarb & Lieberman)
2. Promotes healthy sexual and romantic relationships (Goldfarb & Lieberman)
3. Brings awareness to child sex abuse (Goldfarb & Lieberman)
4. Increases safety and understanding for the LGBTQ+ community (Goldfarb & Lieberman)
5. Decreases date rape and other sexual violence (Goldfarb & Lieberman)

III. Standards and Criteria

A. Our solution should:

1. Promote well educated adolescents on a broader range of topics relating to sexual health.
2. Require a wider variety of related topics in nationwide curriculum – aka making sexual education comprehensive.

IV. Possible Solutions

- A. Making comprehensive sex ed a requirement and a governmentally funded program in American education.
- B. Requiring comprehensive sexual education to be taught atleast once to students at the age of puberty.
- C. Requiring new textbooks to be issued for school sex education classes every 5 years.
- D. Mandating health and sexual education teachers to attend trainings on how to provide extensive education on the topic.
- E. Raising awareness to the public of the necessity of comprehensive sex education.

Works Cited

“America's Sex Education: How We Are Failing Our Students.” USC, University of Southern California, 8 Sept. 2017, <https://nursing.usc.edu/blog/americas-sex-education/>.

“Adolescent Health.” World Health Organization, WHO, https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab_1.

“Comprehensive Sexuality Education.” ACOG, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Nov. 2016, <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2016/11/comprehensive-sexuality-education>.

Dailard, Cynthia, and Guttmacher Institute. “Sex Education: Politicians, Parents, Teachers and Teens.” Guttmacher Institute, 1 Feb. 2001, <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2001/02/sex-education-politicians-parents-teachers-and-teens>.

“Family Planning/Contraception Methods.” World Health Organization, WHO, 9 Nov. 2020, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception>.

Finer, Lawrence B. “Trends in Premarital Sex in the United States, 1954-2003.” Public Health Reports (Washington, D.C. : 1974), Association of Schools of Public Health, 2007, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1802108/#__sec6title.

Goldfarb, Eva S., and Lisa D. Lieberman. "Three Decades of Research: The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 68, no. 1, 12 Oct. 2020, pp. 13–27., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.07.036>.

Huber, Valerie, "A Historical Analysis of Public School Sex Education in America Since 1900" (2009). Master of Education Research Theses. 21.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/education_theses/21

Kantor, L.M., Santelli, J.S., Teitler, J. *et al.* Abstinence-only policies and programs: An overview. *Sex Res Soc Policy* **5**, 6 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2008.5.3.6>

"Key Facts HIV - World Health Organization." WHO, July 2022, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/hq-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-library/key-facts-hiv-2021-26july2022.pdf?sfvrsn=8f4e7c93_5.

Lavin, Lauren A., "The History of Sex Education in the United States: With Application to South Dakota" (2020). Honors Thesis. 119.
<https://red.library.usd.edu/honors-thesis/119>

"Over Half of U.S. Teens Have Had Sexual Intercourse by Age 18, New Report Shows." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, 22 June 2018, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2017/201706_NSFG.htm.

Parenthood, Planned. "What Is Sex Education?: Sex Ed Definition and Qa." Planned Parenthood, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/for-educators/what-sex-education>.

"Prevention - STD Information from CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, 23 Mar. 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/default.htm>.

Scales, Peter. "Sex Education in the '70s and '80s: Accomplishments, Obstacles and Emerging Issues." *Family Relations*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1981, pp. 557–66. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/584345>. Accessed 19 Sep. 2022.

"Sex and HIV Education." Guttmacher Institute, 30 Aug. 2022, <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/sex-and-hiv-education>.

"Table 5." 2019 Crimes in the United States, FBI, 29 Aug. 2019, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/tables/table-5>.

“Why Is Sexual Education Taught in Schools?” State Policies on Sex Education in Schools, NCSL, 1 Oct. 2020, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-policies-on-sex-education-in-schools.aspx>.