*Outline:*

+ Title, sub

+Scroll

+ Blank

+ Highlighted

+ Teen Preg Rates?

+ Specific States

+ Text (mandates, enforcement)

+ Mandate map

+ Text (correlations, teen preg, sex ed retainment, abstinence)

+ Data viz (bar, categorical)

+ Text (legislation, consent education)

+ State map (w/ dropdown)

*Draft:*

**Sex Education After #MeToo: Not Much Has Changed**

Only 29 U.S. states require sex education. What are they teaching, and what's being left out?

By Annette Choi

[BLANK MAP]

There are no federal mandates enforcing sex education in the United States. It's up to each state to decide what to teach, if anything.

[MAP WITH STATES HIGHLIGHTED WITH SEX ED MANDATES]

Currently, 29 states and the District of Columbia require public schools to include sex education as part of its curriculum.

[ONE MORE HEXGRID MAP, MAYBE HEAT MAP WITH TEEN PREGNANCY?]

[TEXT]

[CALIFORNIA POP UP]

California requires more topics to be covered than most states, including consent—a new mandate introduced in 2020 and adopted by eight states and DC.

[ARIZONA]

On the other hand, there’s Arizona, which solely requires abstinence to be stressed.

[KANSAS POP UP]

Then there are anomalies like Kansas—that says “teach,” but doesn’t tell specify what to teach.

Growing up in Virginia, Elizabeth Nash—Senior State Issues Manager at the Guttmacher Institute—says she received a pretty comprehensive sex education. However, that wasn’t the case for everyone who graduated from the same school.

“I was talking to someone who went to high school ten years behind me and got the gum example,” she said. “I know the policy didn’t change in ten years, but the teacher did.”

The gum example is a common analogy used in abstinence-only sex education to scare teenagers from having sex. You’re are told to imagine that you’re pieces of gum. Every time you engage in sex, it’s like you’re getting chewed—until eventually you’re an old, stale piece of gum. As a result, the onus is often left to the girls—to be desirable, to be the fresh stick of gum.

[ANECDOTE]

No nation-level baseline means no consistency across, and often within, state lines. While some Departments of Education (DOE) put out specific guidelines and markers teachers should hit for various grade levels, others will do the bare minimum. [WHICH STATE] does as little as linking to a BBC article about STIs on its website, according to Nash. Teachers’ access to resources needed to build curriculum depends heavily on how willing their DOE is willing to help.

And if a state doesn’t require any sex education be taught, it’s up to individual school district to decide how to move forward.Even in states like California, which has some of the most comprehensive requirement standards in the country, sex education in suburban areas is vastly differently from what’s taught in urban areas. Abstinence is still stressed in parts of the state, while other regions follow all the requirements and providing inclusive education.

This kind of maneuvering happens through loopholes. Jan, [AGE], went to a high school were gym and health were combined into one class. “We only ever got around to gym,” she said.

There’s a lot of leeway for teachers to teach what they want how they want because there’s little to no follow up. Due to standardized testing for subjects like math and English, educators are forced to cover a certain list of topics. There’s no such thing as standardized testing for sex education.

Because sex is thought to be controversial, educators allow teachers to be more conservative in their education, said Nash. “Principals are afraid conservative parents will come to board meetings if contraception is being taught in class,” she said.

[MANDATE MAP-11 MANDATE BUTTON TO CLICK ON, EACH SHOWS DIFFERENT SVG]

Majority of the states that stress abstinence education congregates in the south and Midwest. Nash says this isn’t surprising. “Those are the states that don’t invest in healthcare generally,” she said. “That means Medicaid or family planning.”

Teen pregnancy rates have fallen across the board since 2014. However, the handful of states—including Arizona, Mississippi, and Louisiana, ranking the highest in teen pregnancies have a lot in common. Eleven out of the top 15 states require abstinence be stressed. And only four of the 15 requires the material being taught be medically accurate.

The last piece to this puzzle has to do with stigma—surrounding sex, abortion, contraceptives, and sexual health. “It puts a stop to conversations around sex, everything like dating violence and healthy relationships,” said Nash.

[DATA VIZ, BAR?]

In a recent [survey](https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2019/10/campus-sexual-assault-survey/), the Association of American Universities found one in four undergraduate women have experienced sexual assault as a student. The numbers were similar for transgender/genderqueer/nonbinary students. And seven percent of males also reported nonconsensual sexual contact involving physical force.

Especially with the #MeToo movement sparking nationwide conversations about gender-based violence, people started looking to lawmakers for change. As of 2020, eight states and DC decided to adopt consent education as part of its sex education curriculum.

[BIG PICTURE-REAL WORLD CONSEQUENCES]

For many states, sex education is placed within the “health education” umbrella. That’s a subject matter that is taught starting in Kindergarten. This includes learning about body parts—for four or five-year-olds. Then, moves into good and bad touches. Then puberty. Then relationships and STIs, around middle school.

In 2019, California parents [protested](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-sex-education-california-20190510-story.html) an updated Health Education Curriculum Framework put forth by education officials. The framework includes, “the suggested use of gender-neutral and LGBTQ-inclusive language, material on consent and sex-trafficking and the continued teaching of HIV prevention.”

The negative reaction from parents stems from a coupling of the idea of consent with sex. But according to first grade teacher Gideon Kahn, teaching consent to young children has nothing to do with sex. “When you think about sex education starting in Kindergarten, it’s not about talking to kids about sex,” he said. “It’s about saying, ‘No, I don’t want that.’”

[STATE MAP WITH DROP DOWN? WITH STATE LEVEL MANDATES/LEGISLATION INFO IN POP UP?]

+ Data Source: Guttmacher Institute