Teaching sexuality education online in the K - 12 environment is a new endeavor. We are diving into unfamiliar territory out of necessity, dedication to our students and participants, and with the knowledge that comprehensive information about sexuality is life-sustaining and life-saving. In this time of great need, we are called to this work with even more tenacity and veracity than before. But we are doing so with relatively sparse guidance or research on the pedagogy behind our mandate.

With this new approach to our standing mandate, we must ensure that we do not shift our attention away from what we know are critical elements of effective comprehensive sexuality education. We must continue to make sure our approaches are anti-racist, anti-ableist, LGBTQ-inclusive, and work to dismantle oppression. Issues around access to technology (predominantly to a computer rather than a smartphone and high speed, stable wifi) must be considered and addressed. We must be direct and prepared to discuss the intersectional ways that elements of oppression disproportionately impact People of Color and LGBTQ+ people. Youth oppression (lack of power, control, access, etc.) is also magnified in the move to online learning.

Within this document, you'll find information gleaned from researchers, planners, and implementers in the fields of sexuality, health, and education. The resulting product is a synopsis of our current understanding of best practices in K-12 online sexuality education. This is a living document, and we highly encourage you to engage with it critically. At UN|HUSHED, we're committed to creating great things - together. It is through community questioning and analysis of our materials, methods, and models that we are able to continuously improve everything we offer.

This document originated in the collective work of participants in the first UN|HUSHED web series, called *Teaching Sex Ed Online*. This series was created in the early days of the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic as schools (and thus sex ed classes) were being shut down across the country. The 45 participants who attended the hour-long session on age appropriate guidelines in how to teach sex ed online contributed to this content within developmental age groups. The professionals who participated in that session and who authored pieces of this set of guidelines include:

Alda Santana, MSSW	Heather Alberda, BA, CSE	Marlene Pray, MEd
Brenda Najera, BA	Jessica Neupane, BA	Monique Ingram, CHE
Brittany Keck, BS	Lisa Schulze, MEd, CSE	Sarah Thong, BS
Elizabeth Schob, MSPH, CHES	Malinda Britt	Sharena Domingo, MPH
Gayla Johnson, MSW		

That great wealth of information was gathered and organized, along with many other resources and research, by Karen Rayne, PhD, CSE and Jessica Smarr, MPH into the document you are currently reading.

It would be entirely possible to write an entire textbook on the developmental and pedagogical approaches to sexuality education in K - 12 online learning environments. This is true even given the dearth of information on the topic. What is here relies on the reader to fill in details about their students and participants, classrooms, online access, etc. It is most effective when used in connection with other UN|HUSHED documents, including our Glossary of Online Teaching Terms, Ways to Modify F2F Approaches to the Online Environment, and Tips for Modifying F2F Curriculum for Online Learning.

This is a living document and may be continued to be updated over time. This iteration was published by UN|HUSHED in June, 2020.

A NOTE ON ASSESSING NEEDS AND PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Many families will need additional assistance as they support their children in the online learning process. Providing this support to parents and guardians is especially important with the youngest age groups, as they will need substantial help from adults as they access digital content. Some of the things you may need to discuss with parents are:

- Language barriers and translation needs
- Ability levels and potential barriers (for example, if a student has parents who are deaf, they may need a sign language interpreter during video chats)
- Ability to access school supplies like paper and writing instruments
- Technological device(s) available
- Internet connection
- Technological experience and comfort
- Time availability
- Basic needs (for example, whether or not a family may need assistance accessing food)
- Additional stressors (for example, an illness or death in the family)

To meet these needs, you will need support from your organization and your community at large. You may need to connect with other educators and organizations to share resources like WiFi hotspots, translators, or interpreters. Thankfully, we've already seen many needs met due to the creativity, effort, and compassion of educators and communities around the world.

Developmental Stage

While translating face to face curricula into an online format will be challenging with any age group, it is arguably most difficult for younger students. These children require more direction, more engagement, and more support from parents and guardians in order to access and participate in online spaces. However, children in this age group are also often equipped with a powerful enthusiasm for learning. This certainly won't be an easy journey, but you'll thankfully be leading a group of intrepid adventurers, ready to discover something new!

The first few years of school coincide with a child's increased ability to define themselves in more complex terms. At age three or four, a child might describe themselves as "tall and strong!" By age six, that same child may still be tall and strong, but they'll also "be the best whistler in their whole grade and a really good friend." Children are also increasingly aware of bigger ideas such as cultural values and social roles. These developmental changes coincide with substantial changes in a child's environment. Many will face new rules, schedules, peer relationships, expectations, and goals.

In general, students in this age group thrive when learning opportunities are combined with physical movement, manipulation of objects, and imagination. Both free and structured play should be a vital part of these childrens' learning experiences. When in doubt, it's hard to go wrong with a song, dance, or game!

Sex Ed Needs

Sexuality education is a lifelong adventure, and there's no reason that adventure shouldn't start as early as possible! In early elementary, sexuality lessons can help inform students as they form new relationships, develop their sense of self, and evaluate the world around them. Some of the most important topics that should be covered in K-2nd grade are:

- **Celebration of the body:** Children should be provided with accurate information and positive messaging about their own bodies. This includes specifically naming and explaining the function of external genitalia and the anus. Children should also be encouraged to listen to and be kind to their body. Lessons should explicitly provide students with examples of self-compassionate language toward their bodies (e.g., "All bodies are good bodies," "I like my fingers because I can use them to draw dinosaurs.").

- **Celebration of identity:** Children of any age should be given the freedom to discover what they like and what labels, if any, they would like to apply to themselves. At this time, students should be presented with information about gender identity and expression. This information should affirm all gender identities and expressions, and let children know they

are the primary experts on their own identity. Discussions about cultural ideas surrounding gender can also be engaged in at this time, introducing students to skills they can use to critique and question the world around them.

- **Consent:** Conversations on consent will likely be some of the hardest and most important conversations you will engage in with this age group. Children should be empowered with the knowledge of the kind of respect they should expect to be shown to their bodies and identities. This includes discussions of what is entirely their decision at this age (e.g., choosing whether or not to hug someone) and what is partially the decision of specific adults in their lives who are responsible for making sure that child is safe and loved (e.g., wearing a coat rather than a bathing suit when going to play in the snow, taking medicine when you're sick). Students should also be given expectations for appropriate ways that these specific adults should approach these moments.

  The conversation can then expand out to respecting the boundaries of others, detailing how to communicate about boundaries with friends and family and how to apologize if a boundary is disrespected. Finally, students should be given specific information on what to do if a violation of consent occurs, including details on who to talk to, what to expect from that conversation, and the reassurance that they should always have their boundaries honored and treated with respect.

- **Family:** Discussions about family should explore what a family is and qualities of a supportive family. Diversity in families should be explicitly celebrated, validating students who live in multi-parent households, single-parent households, families who have fostered and/or adopted, big families, small families, queer families, etc. Children should also be given the chance to identify supportive members of their family and the actions they take to make that child feel loved.

- **Friendship:** The new and developing friendships among students in this age group are the perfect place for these children to practice their budding communication skills. Lessons about consent and respect should be applied to friendships, and students should be encouraged to actively dialogue about consent with their peers. You can also lead students through discussions about qualities of a good friend, and how to cultivate those qualities in oneself.

Online Engagement

Previous literature suggests that the recommended amount of screentime for children in this age group is a maximum of 1 - 1 ½ hours a day. However, these recommendations are based primarily on the assumption that screen time will be accompanied by sedentary activity and little engagement. The experience a child will have sitting down to watch television is going to be substantially different than their experience playing "Simon Says" with their classmates on a video call. Until we have more robust literature exploring the effects of screen time as it relates to activity level, engagement level, and educational content to inform practices, educators will likely have to experiment with different lengths of time to discover works best for their students.

Thankfully, it's much easier to translate the recommended amount of sustained attention into the online space. Kindergarteners are generally capable of roughly 3 minutes of sustained attention, while 1st and 2nd graders can sustain attention for about 5 minutes. This should guide educators as they decide on the appropriate length of videos or how long they should "lecture" for. Students should be given the opportunity to frequently engage and prompted to move around between any videos or didactic instruction. When possible, include some element of choice into lessons (e.g., allowing students to choose which order they view videos in, holding a "show and tell" session for students to show off one object they choose). Adding elements of choice can empower students and increase their buy-in for the process.

Overall, establishing a routine and providing opportunities for high-quality, engaging learning experiences are much more important than meeting a specific time limit.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Here are a few specific ideas for improving the online learning experience of students in this age group. Some of these ideas require supplies outside of the online space, which educators may need to send to students. A list of potential supplies is included with each idea.

- Provide opportunities for socialization and communication

  ○ Hold a "show and tell" session. Before holding an online class session, ask students to choose an item they can bring and speak about. Students may be asked to bring any item they like, or items in a specific category. For example, you could ask students to bring an item from nature to share with the class, like a leaf, flower, stick, rock, or shell. Give each student a set amount of time to show off and talk about their item to the group.

  ○ Assign communication buddies. Split students up into groups of two or three, and have them communicate with one another through video chats, phone calls, and/or mail. This communication can be unstructured, or centered around a prompt. For example, you could ask students to show their buddies a photograph or drawing of their family. Students could also be provided with a list of questions to ask one another.

  ○ Supplies students may need: stamps, envelopes, paper, writing implements.

- Encourage physical movement during class meetings by:

  ○ Dancing and singing together.

  ○ Playing "Simon says."

  ○ Leading students through a series of stretches.

- Guided exploration outside of class meetings.

  ○ Scavenger hunts. Provide students with a list of things to find in and around their homes or in a selected digital resource.

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○ Assigned topics to research. Allow students to pick from several topics to explore on their own or with their family. Provide students with selected resources they can explore related to their selected topic. They can then report back and share information they've learned with the class. While this type of activity can be done with Kindergarteners, it will likely be easiest to facilitate with 2nd graders.

○ Family interviews. Provide students with a list of questions they can ask family members. You can even have students record these interviews with free apps like the one provided by StoryCorps.

○ Creating media. Inspire students with filmmaking and photography projects! Using disposable or digital cameras, students can capture moments based on prompts provided by educators. You can also have students create stop motion videos using the free Stop Motion Studio app.

○ Supplies students may need:

  ▪ books

  ▪ disposable cameras

  ▪ links to applications and devices to access them on

  ▪ links to digital resources

  ▪ paper

  ▪ writing implements

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

As a group, students in this age group tend to be ready to face a challenge. They are rapidly discovering, developing, and honing skills, and often look forward to opportunities to test out their powers! As you face new challenges in the digital space, don't hesitate to look to this plucky bunch for a bit of inspiration.

Children at this age still benefit greatly when given adequate opportunities to play, explore, and engage in physical activity both by themselves and with peers. They are often eager to learn new words and experiment with language in new ways. Due to their expanding attention spans and skill sets, they are capable of longer, more involved tasks and projects. Students at this age group often have a keen interest in what is "right" and "wrong," and often apply this focus on justice to their developing understanding of the world at large.

Many children will begin puberty during this time. Some of the primary factors that will affect when exactly children experience puberty are biological sex characteristics, including sex chromosomes, horomone production and reception, and anatomical structures such as ovaries and testicles. On average, children with biological characteristics that we put in the female category (XX chromosomes and ovaries) will begin puberty a little earlier than children with biological characteristics from the male category (XY chromosomes and testicles). Those with female biological characteristics will often experience breast budding around the age of 9 or 10 and have their first period around the age of 12. Those with male biological characteristics generally begin puberty a little later at age 10 or 11. The timing of puberty for intersex children, who posess biological characteristics from both the female and male categories, will vary greatly depending on what combination of characteristics they have.

Even for children who possess similar biological sex characteristics, these averages exist in between a wide range of numbers, and it's not uncommon for many children to experience these milestones a few years earlier or a few years later than the "average." Regardless of when a student personally experiences changes, they can all greatly benefit from a robust, inclusive sexuality curricula that includes information on puberty so that they can understand themselves and their peers more deeply. This is especially true for transgender students, who may have a uniquely complex relationship with their bodies during this time.

SEX ED NEEDS

Arguably, the most important job of sexuality education at this time is to give students the tools they need to understand and navigate puberty changes. However, sexuality education at this time can and should go beyond that, providing students with information on identity, relationships, and communication. Some of the primary topics that should be discussed during this time:

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- **Physical changes of puberty:** Before beginning a discussion about puberty, participants should be equipped with a working understanding of the difference between someone's gender identity and their biological sex. When discussing puberty, use biological terminology and categories rather than gender categories. Instead of saying, "most girls will get periods," it's more inclusive and accurate to say, "most people with ovaries and a uterus will get periods" or "most people with female body parts will get periods." The language used in these discussions is still evolving, and will likely change as we find better ways to communicate about identity and bodies.

  Discussions about puberty changes should include wide range of information on what kind of changes children may experience during puberty, including breast development, growth of underarm hair, growth of pubic hair, growth of facial hair, acne, changes in odor, increases in sweating, growth of genitalia, menstruation, ejaculation, and erections. Discussions about each individual change can include information on the cause, common experiences, potential ways to address the change, and resources for learning more or treating specific issues that may arise. Some of these discussions - especially those related to menstruation and ejaculation - will likely need to be more detailed than others. After these discussions, students should ideally have an understanding of and compassion for their experiences and the experiences of their peers.

  Puberty discussions should also include specific information and support for students who may be experiencing gender dysphoria. Infrastructure should be made available for students who would like to seek out additional support and resources.

- **Social and emotional changes of puberty:** The physical changes of puberty are often accompanied by changes to a child's social and emotional landscapes. Emotionally, their moods may become more intense and change rapidly as they work to cope with fluctuating hormone levels, changing bodies, and new social dynamics. Ideally, students should be introduced to a variety of tools for constructively and compassionately identifying and addressing their own emotions in the years preceding puberty.

  Information should also be provided to children's support systems about how to show empathy and patience as their kids develop their ability to understand and regulate their emotions. While the intensity and timing of a child's mood can be affected by puberty changes, that doesn't mean those feelings aren't real or valid or even extremely understandable. Providing adults with tools to help address these feelings can make life easier for all parties involved before, during, and after puberty.

  Puberty also often correlates with an increase in romantic and sexual feelings and changes in social dynamics. Students in grades 3-5 are ready to have more in-depth conversations around what consent and communication can look like in both platonic and more romantic peer relationships.

- **Sexual Orientation:** Students at this age also benefit from more in-depth discussions about sexual orientation. They should be given information about some of the available (and constantly developing!) language that is used to describe identities. Most importantly, they

should be given explicit messaging about how they are the experts on their own identity, and they can choose how they want to define it.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

While children in this age group are becoming increasingly capable of pursuing knowledge independently, they still need a fair amount of structure and routine. This routine should ideally include daily office hours for students and parents to reach out. Regarding educational expectations, students can be given about one to two hours worth of material each day. Not all, or even most of this material needs to be engaged with in a digital space. Students can be prompted to learn offline through activities that feature exploration, reading, crafting, and problem solving.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1 - 1 ½ hours of screen time per day. Just as with the K-2 students, however, this number is often based on the assumption that screen time implies sedentary, passive behavior. Again, until we have more robust literature exploring the effects of screen time as it relates to activity level, engagement level, and educational content to inform practices, educators will likely have to experiment with different lengths of time to discover works best for their students.

Children in grades 3-5 can be expected to sustain attention for approximately 10 minutes. Lectures and educational videos should generally not extend past this time limit. Any didactic instruction should be broken up with engaging activities like games, quizzes, and writing prompts. Overall, students should spend more time doing than they do listening or observing.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Here are a few specific ideas for improving the online learning experience of students in this age group. (A handful of these ideas can also be found on the K-2 list of recommendations). Some of these ideas require supplies outside of the online space, which educators may need to send to students. A list of potential supplies is included with each idea.

- Encourage physical movement
    - Dance or sing together
    - Play games
    - Create outdoor art with sidewalk chalk and/or items found in nature
    - Challenge students to build or create things with objects they have on hand. They can then take pictures or videos of their creations to share with the class. Some ideas include:
        - Obstacle courses
        - Mazes

- Art projects made out of recyclables (such as empty jars or toilet paper tubes)
- Engineering challenges (e.g., Building structures with marshmallows and toothpicks)
  - Supplies students may need:
    - marshmallows
    - paper
    - recyclables
    - sidewalk chalk
    - tape or glue
    - toothpicks
    - writing utensils

- Provide opportunities for more independent learning
  - Autobiographical projects. Challenge students to document their own lives through writing projects, photography, or self-portraits.
  - Assigned topics to research. Allow students to pick from several topics to explore on their own or with their family. Provide students with selected resources they can explore related to their selected topic. They can then report back and share information they've learned with the class. You may also ask students to teach someone they live with!
  - Family interviews. Provide students with a list of questions they can ask family members. You can even have students record these interviews with free apps like the one provided by StoryCorps.
  - Creating media. Inspire students with filmmaking and photography projects! Using disposable or digital cameras, students can capture moments based on prompts provided by educators. You can also have students create stop motion videos using the free Stop Motion Studio app.
  - Supplies students may need:
    - books
    - disposable cameras
    - links to applications and devices to access them on
    - links to digital resources
    - paper
    - writing implements

- Provide opportunities for socialization and communication
  - Set aside time for socialization. Designate time for students to chat and share as a

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group. These discussions can be focused around a prompt, or they can be just a minute of "sharing" from each student.

○ Group discussions. Assign students into smaller groups where they can work together on projects or problems, discuss materials, and socialize.

○ Hold office hours. Provide students with opportunities to connect with you in a one-on-one setting. Ideally, you can encourage them to reach out for any reason - to discuss classwork, a technological issue, or just to chat.

○ Host a family book club. If possible, have all your students read a book with a family member. Invite them to participate in a book club discussion. This can be done as one large group, or as several smaller groups, depending on class size.

○ Assign communication buddies. Split students up into groups of two or three, and have them communicate with one another through video chats, phone calls, and/or mail. This communication can be unstructured, or centered around a prompt. For example, you could ask students to show their buddies a photograph or drawing of their family. Students could also be provided with a list of questions to ask one another.

○ Supplies students may need:

- envelopes

- paper

- stamps

- writing implements

Developmental Stage

The middle school years are a time of deep social and personal learning. They are the preparation at the end of childhood for the move into adolescence, a balancing act of eyeing the future before the real work of becoming an adult begins in high school.

Young people between the ages of 11 and 14 (as most 6th - 8th graders are) exist on a wide developmental spectrum. A young 11-year-old can still be very much a child, wanting physical, practical, concrete engagement that is based in stories and play while an old 14-year-old can already be working to provide support for their family, be sexually active, and thinking in complex, abstract ways. The vast majority of young people in this age range, however, actually inhabit both of the extremes and all of the spaces between. They need the easy accessibility of the ways that they learned and thought during childhood alongside the challenge of having complex ideas presented to them and an expectation of exhibiting deeply nuanced relationship skills. Curricular content that is able to span all of these elements is ideal.

Sex Ed Needs

While the middle school years are developmentally complex and varied, these are still the best years to begin a really robust comprehensive sexuality education program. There are a number of reasons why:

1. Most middle school age youth are either feeling sexual/romantic attractions or are aware that they will feel sexual/romantic attractions in the future and so need context for those feelings. Youth who do not - and do not expect to - have these feelings are often baffled by their peers' sexual/romantic attractions and need them explained.

2. Because the majority of middle schoolers are not sexually active, information about sexual activity is a mostly cognitive learning experience rather than an affective or identity related learning experience. This allows the information to be more readily integrated into future sexual and romantic decision making rather than feeling like it is a judgment on past or current decisions.

3. Middle school is when most young people begin to have access to unmonitored (or less strictly monitored) digital devices. If an individual young person does not have access, it is likely that their friends do as well. This allows access to a huge range of information about sex and sexuality. Rather than leaving young people to google information about sex and sexuality or to use pornography as their education, it better serves them to provide professionally presented education on sexuality that is constructed in age appropriate, targeted ways.

4. In addition to information, digital access provides social media access. The increased potential to form and build relationships outside of adult-created spaces shifts the potential dynamic between peers, leaving young people needing more information, guidance, and explanations of human relationships.

With such a driving need for information, the content of comprehensive sexuality education classrooms for 6th - 8th graders should include all elements of anatomy and physiology, body positivity, media and online safety, sexual orientation, gender identity, relationships (sexual, romantic, platonic, friendship, etc.), effective communication, how to ask someone out and how to break up with someone, conception, pregnancy, birth, contraception, unplanned pregnancy and parenting, STIs, how to buy condoms and access other kinds of sexual healthcare, dating violence, consent, sexual harassment, assault, and rape, how to manage emotional rejection, and sexual values.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Prior to the COVID crisis, middle schoolers averaged 4 - 5 hours a day of screen time prior to schools. While it is difficult to assess what the number of hours spent on digital devices might be since students are primarily learning online now, it is easy to assume that it has jumped substantially higher for most students.

Students in this age range can have up to 30 minutes of sustained attention, with 180 minutes of total recommended sustained attention or classwork per day. They should not spend more than 30 minutes per class or topic per day.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that students in this age range have no more than two hours (160 minutes) of screen time per day. However, the American Psychology Association recommends that rather than assessing the number of hours spent on a screen that a more useful metric is assessing the kinds of screen based interactions for their usefulness, quality, and elements of human connection. Particularly while all social contact and all learning are primarily (or exclusively) online, assessing the combined impact of quality and quantity of screen time is a useful approach.

As a facilitator it may be difficult to assess how the screen time that you require impacts students' overall levels of screen time because it has the potential to vary dramatically by student. Nevertheless, it must be considered. You can begin this process by considering whether you are requiring more than 30 minutes of screen time per day (or a combined 150 minutes per week) for your particular course, inclusive of both synchronous and asynchronous content. If you are, you should probably scale back your digital learning expectations. You may also consider ways to increase students' off-line learning, such as having them participate in off-line conversations about the topics and reporting back on them.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Below is a series of recommendations for effectively using online learning techniques for middle school age students:

- Middle school age youth require substantial structure in order to feel comfortable in learning spaces. The online learning space is no different. They also require a high level of social interaction. Setting aside specific times for social engagement and learning will benefit the students and the facilitator.

- When doing asynchronous classes, use facilitator-made videos, which provides connection between the student, the facilitator, and the content. Seeing the facilitator's face, hearing their voice, and having access to some body language will all increase students' level of buy-in and connection to the classroom community.

- Students can make and/or find videos to share with the class as a way of extending their voice into the learning space and gaining autonomy in that space.

- It is critical that students have something interactive to do while in the online platform, whether it is synchronous or asynchronous. This can include things like having conversations with their peers on discussion boards, engaging in small breakout rooms, having show-and-tell, giving feedback/thoughts by polls, etc.

- The functions in a synchronous learning space, including chatting and small groups, offer ample room for creativity and activity diversity. For example, the chat function can be a place to roleplay a text conversation and the small groups can provide a place for more intimate conversations.

- There needs to be a certain amount of direct, personal contact to let students know that they are on the right track while learning, especially if there is homework involved. This contact can include elements such as specific, individual feedback, using students' names when calling on them, 1:1 emails or office hours, etc.

- Don't be hesitant for students to do solo work while in synchronous digital learning spaces. Everyone can be working silently on a task in the same way that they would in a F2F classroom setting.

- Having fun is a critical element of online learning - it may even be more important online than in a F2F classroom because many students won't believe it is possible or won't expect it online. Integrating elements like arts and crafts (everyone can use what they have at home or you can send supply boxes to students' homes), jokes, and silly videos can build rapport and community.

- When using videos, it is useful to either have points to stop and discuss (synchronous settings) or have guided questions for students to answer as they watch (asynchronous settings). This kind of moderation for engagement keeps students attention and provides a structure for integrating the new content into students' existing knowledge structures.

- Games are great!

- Remember your time limit for screen use!

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DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

High schoolers are generally between the ages of 14 and 18, and these years are often seen as the tipping point into adulthood. High schoolers are working to clarify their own identity, understand the differences between themselves and their families of origin, and looking voraciously towards what their future might be. They are often highly social, as human evolution has guided them towards needing social interactions beyond their family unit of origin.

There is often an almost boundless energy in high school age young people, although they do not always direct that energy in ways that the adults in their lives would prefer them to. They can grab on to a concept, activity, friend, idea, game, identity, or several of those elements all at once, and not let go. This is where the drive for extra curricular activities, the passion for a romantic or sexual partner (even short term ones), and obsessions with beating levels on computer games comes from. Many youth hold an almost idyllic view of what is possible. They believe the world can change, if they work hard enough for it.

High schoolers are almost universally able to conceptualize theories and ideas rather than being cognitively tied to concrete examples. This allows learning to be more nuanced, which ultimately provides for a more accurate perception of the highly nuanced topic of human sexuality.

SEX ED NEEDS

About half of all young people become sexually active during their high school years. A very high percentage of those who do not become sexually active during high school will do so in the years immediately after graduating. These young people need specific, personally applicable information about how they can attend to their sexual health in the respectful, engaged way that we want them to. Without information, they are unable to make choices that fully reflect their sexual values or respect their physical bodies.

High school is also the time when a majority of young people fall in love and have a serious relationship for the first time. Regardless of their decisions around physical intimacy, they are in need of information, support, and insight into what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like. Navigating romantic and sexual intimacy does not come naturally for most people - it is a skillset that can be learned and improved on.

While the middle school years are a key time for young people to begin developing their identities, high school is often a time when that search for identity clarifies and coalesces. Understanding one's own sexual and gender identities is a critical element of the identity process during high school, but so are other aspects of identity that are related to sex and sexuality like religious and value systems, body image, and understanding your own level of sexual desire.

The tipping point into legal adulthood happens in high school for the vast majority of students. This brings with it a new level of responsibility, from the way they engage with their younger peers to what kind of access they have to pornography, and a new level of long term legal risk, in sexual and other realms. Not having access to this information can cause clear, substantial, and lifelong harm.

High school students need comprehensive sexuality education that covers all of these issues, and more. They need these topics contextualized both historically and according to their micro and macro cultures. They need to learn how to talk about sexuality issues beyond their own personal experiences, especially as it relates to social justice. They are prepared to have these conversations, and in fact often are having them regardless of whether adults are participating in them or not.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

High school age young people are often referred to as "digital natives" and are assumed to be proficient and active in online spaces. While it is true that most teenagers are active online, this does not speak to their actual capacity to interact effectively with new or varied online interfaces beyond the social media platforms that they use regularly.

Before online learning was the primary form of schooling teenagers averaged between 8 and 18 hours of screen time per day. For the high end of that range, it would be hard to spend much more time engaging digitally.

The maximum recommended time for online learning at the high school age is 4.5 hours a day, broken up into 6 45-minute class times. And yet, many schools are requiring more work than this recommended number, including both synchronous and asynchronous expectations. Figuring out the appropriate balance of classwork for all classes, and then for sexuality content specifically, should be both a whole-school and an individual-content area conversation. While any individual facilitator cannot control how much time others demand of students, it is critical that we take responsibility for our role in the demands of their time, both in terms of sheer amount and also in terms of content.
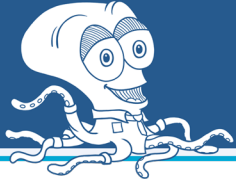
It is important to take high school age people's need for learning within social contexts into account. Holding a learning environment online does not shift this need, rather expands and deepens it. Without the in person contact that comes with face-to-face learning, youth need to be shown how to meet that need through online learning. Small groups where participants talk with each other, have deep discussions, and connect personally are the most effective way of meeting this need. Including curricular content that supports the mental, social, and emotional elements of sexuality through both content and pedagogical process is a critical piece of the work of teaching sexual health content in digital environments.

Pedagogical Recommendations for Online Learning

Below is a series of recommendations for effectively using online learning techniques for learners in this age range. The most important thing to remember is that fun and active engagement is the underpinning for all effective learning!

- Because high school age youth are emerging in their sexuality, they connect with sex and sexuality content in personal ways. This means that role playing is often a key supportive element. It allows the youth to consider actual verbiage and feelings that people their age might have in a variety of scenarios and how those elements might impact their short and long term decision making. Role playing digitally is easy and accessible. There are a variety of options, depending on whether your learning modality is synchronous or asynchronous:

  - In a synchronous setting, two (or more) participants can unmute themselves and role play verbally as they would in a classroom.

  - In a synchronous setting, participants can all go to breakout rooms and role play in much smaller groups, with or without observers. Observers can think about and comment on how the role players interacted.

  - In a synchronous setting, two or more participants can role play via the textbox as they would via a texting or messaging experience.

  - In an asynchronous setting, half of the participants can be assigned to be "Conversation Starters" and half can be assigned to be "Conversation Continuers." The Starters can post initial comments and the continuers can choose conversations to take part in. The Starters can respond to the Continuers, etc.

  - In an asynchronous setting, participants can create scripts on their own that they post and others can comment and discuss them.

- Videos are a critical element for online learning, particularly asynchronous online learning. There are benefits to creating your own, which provides personal connection that can feel absent when all of the content is delivered via text alone, and there are benefits to using videos created by others. Videos that include famous or otherwise recognizable people, for example, can offer validity and buy-in from the participants. It is also generally true that videos created by others can offer a higher quality videography and editing experience when compared to facilitators. Using a mix of both, when possible, is best. No videos should not be longer than 7 minutes for 9th and 10th graders or longer than 10 minutes for 11th and 12th graders. All videos should be accompanied by thought questions or another kind of assignment to support their thinking as they watch or review.

- High school aged youth need less structure than younger age groups. In fact, they thrive on the freedom to be cognitively creative and interactive. Online environments often include limitations on this kind of creativity, so it may be best to encourage participants to create offline as homework and then use the shared online space to show others what they have created. One great example of this kind of approach is to have participants research topics and create peer-led learning spaces for their peers to experience.

- Including fun apps or other sites and interfaces with high school age youth is well within their skill set and can offer a fun, dynamic, interactive experience if you take the time to teach them how to use each new platform (rather than expecting them to know or figure it out on their own). Some examples include:

    ○ Google Docs, Mural, Kahoot

    ○ Yotribe, Teeoh (still in beta testing)

    ○ It is possible to make pencil and paper activities like worksheets into more active, digital activities through these and other platforms like Flippity, Google Forms, or a PowerPoint Quiz.

- The Zoom chat box is a great way for participants to connect with each other, have side dialogue that enhances the primary conversations, activities, and learning objectives, and to let a facilitator know when a tech issue is occurring. However, it is also a place where participants might ask or share inappropriate content, bully each other, or distract from the primary goal of the learning space. As a facilitator, be aware of the different levels of restriction you can put on the chat box, how you might use it effectively as a learning tool, and let participants know that even if they are just chatting with each other, apparently privately, you will still have the option of reading their conversation after the meeting is over.

- Grading is extremely tricky with this content, and even more so in a digital modality. If absolutely necessary, it's best to provide completion grades only. Depending on funding, you may be able to provide stipends to participants who participate fully as an alternative incentive.

- Sex education classes hold a sacred and unique space for young people. It does not need to mirror, look, or feel like other academic subjects.

Developmental Stage

Adult learners, and the spaces in which they learn, comprise a huge range of potential experiences. For example, while college students technically fall into this category, a first year college student who has just completed their high school degree, may be supported most effectively through the approaches in the section focusing on older adolescents. A much older adult, who themselves has teenage children, is likely to need a very different process that takes into account their considerable range of knowledge, life experiences, and the demands of parenting. Whether an adult is learning in a college setting, among friends, or from a volunteer at a local organization also impacts the ways in which they want to and are able to access information and incorporate it into their preexisting knowledge structures.

Adults have often been away from formal, structured learning for some time, and instead have a wealth of personal experiences that are integrative to their understanding of themselves, their biography, and the trajectory of the rest of their lives. This impacts the ways that they are able to sit and learn, and typically need an environment that is very collegial, collaborative, and connected.

Sex Ed Needs

While many adults have a basic knowledge about sexual health and sexual function, many do not. Because sexuality education is so spottily provided to children and teenagers, it is critical not to assume what level of knowledge adults have. Some have never had a full conversation about sexual experiences, including what they may find either painful or pleasurable, even if they are married and have children. Other adults will have either had a full education as a young person or (more likely) will have sought out extensive knowledge on their own as an adult. Many adults do not feel that they fully understand the emerging topics of gender and sexual identity, while others are thought leaders on the subject.

Human sexuality is an evolving process, and so sexuality education must also evolve and continue. Even adults who found themselves to be sufficiently educated as young adults on common sexuality education topics like sexual and gender identities, their sexual health, and ways to sexually interact with their partner(s) to support their relationships may feel adrift if they become parents or by midlife or as they enter older adulthood. Not only do bodies experience changes over these years, but many people experience shifts in their arousal patterns, their sexual interests, and their feelings and emotions connected to their sexuality. These elements can bring massive shifts in the ways that they feel connected (or not) with their partner(s) as well as their own identity and understanding of self.

Given that adult knowledge about sex and sexuality ranges so dramatically both between individuals and even across one person's lifespan, it is not possible to know how much a person knows about sexuality - either as a broad topic or even as it pertains to their own body - without having a direct, explicit conversation with them.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Before quarantine began, adults in the United States spent almost half of their days (around 11 hours/day) consuming some kind of media. While research has yet to catch up, this percentage has gone up in 2020. For example, the percentage of time spent digitally accessing current events and global news from March 2019 to March 2020 went up by 215% in the United States. In contrast, the recommended number of hours spent on digital devices for adults ranges around 2 - 4 hours, which is dramatically below most adults' current behavior patterns. Some of this is, of course, necessitated by working hours, but much of it is also spent connecting with family and friends via social media accounts, watching television and movies, learning and reading, and other forms of recreation.

Historically, much of adults' online interactions have been via email, reading, writing, engaging on social media, texting, messaging, and consuming videos (including both short and long form). However, the current situation has shifted quickly so that many adults are now spending many hours every day on video conference calls. While providing for far more interactivity, there is a growing awareness of "Zoom exhaustion" that must be contended with when considering how to provide effective education using a digital platform. What may be most important to providing sexuality education for adults online is to be seen as providing something unique, special, different from their standard working experiences so that they are more connected to and enthusiastic about participating.

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Humans spend the majority of our lives as adults, but most of our formal, group based learning happens before we become adults. This shift away from structured education means that most adults need a different kind of pedagogical support than people who have been in classroom structures continuously since childhood.

Adult learners are more able to attend to their own levels of engagement, learning, productivity, and balance than younger learners. However, this does not mean that they will monitor these elements effectively without facilitator support. Whether they are participating in the learning experience voluntarily, out of their own interest, or through some kind of external force (like a required training through their place of work) will bring out sharp differences in the ways that adult learners respond to and engage with the facilitator and with the materials.

Voluntary adult learning about sex and sexuality most often happens in informal, peer based settings. This setting invites feelings of connection, honesty, and community that often lead to increased openness to a topic that may otherwise feel uncomfortable or illicit. Focusing on this kind of learning space, regardless of whether it is the actual initial impulse for learning, can increase engagement and boost learning outcomes.

Adult learners may be more critical of facilitation techniques than young people because they feel like they could have done it better, because they have seen it done better, because they have strong preferences for different learning approaches than those the facilitator uses, or a variety of other reasons that may or may not be related to the facilitator's skill level.

Below is a series of recommendations for effectively using online learning techniques for learners in this age range. The most important thing to remember is that fun and active engagement is the underpinning for all effective learning!

- Adults absolutely benefit from a carefully crafted pedagogy. This point becomes even more poignant when the learning is taking place in an unfamiliar modality, like online learning. Adults may feel intimidated with unfamiliar learning technology, including different platforms, different kinds of requests around topics like muting/unmuting, and the different kinds of structures that come with online learning. Take time to teach participants how to use the technology. While it may be frustrating to reduce the amount of content in order to spend time on technology skills, it will ultimately result in adult learners being sufficiently comfortable in an online learning space to incorporate new knowledge and ideas. Without taking this time, they may not be able to take in any of the content.

- Adult learners need to feel that their biographies, voices, and opinions are being taken into account. Spend time listening, and allow participants to listen to each other. If the learning environment is via Zoom or another video conference program, and your group is larger than five or six people, use breakout rooms at least once every meeting time. Provide structure to these groups, noting who should go first (this is often best done in a general way, like saying the person whose first name comes first alphabetically will begin, or by noting a group leader for each group) so that the participants know what to do when they enter the breakout room rather than having to make it up every time.

- Adult learners are always juggling multiple demands. This may mean that they will need to interact with you, each other, and the learning platform in unique ways. For example, as caretakers, they may not be able to have a truly private space away from their children during class time. They may decide that their children's educational needs take priority over their own and so skip class so that their child can use the technology as needed. They may have more interruptions or absences to attend to issues like family illness or making dinner. Incorporating awareness of and accommodations for these various kinds of demands into initial group agreements will allow for participants to feel comfortable participating when they are able to, and to return to the group after short or prolonged absences.

- Opportunities for creativity and self expression are key elements for adult learners to maintain attention and connection. Many facilitators find it more difficult to figure out how to incorporate these elements into online learning when compared to face to face learning. However, the change in modalities does not mean that there aren't ways for participants to express themselves creatively. Investigate platforms like JamBoard or Padlet, or features like annotate or whiteboard in Zoom, for high tech options. You may also choose to bring low-tech into the high-tech world by mailing each participant a set of colored pencils and some paper, providing time during Zoom calls for drawing, and inviting them to either hold their drawings up or to take pictures of their drawings and share them digitally.

- Adult learners are often very short on time and other resources. They will want to be sure that their time spent learning is effective, practical, and results oriented. Explain your process to them before you begin so they know what to expect. Stay away from anything that might be considered "busy work," and provide resources for them to access later rather than expecting them to memorize information. Invite input on what participants consider to be the most important topics of learning for them and then focus on those elements.

- Provide information in bite-sized chunks so that if participants are called away, they can return without losing their place or line of thought. Ideally keep videos to six minutes or less and readings to 1000 words or less. Provide cognitive structure for moving between videos and readings in a logical flow.

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