



THE ROADMAP



A Teen Guide To Changing Your School's Sex Ed

Written by
Nancy L. Parello
Elizabeth M. Casparian, Ph.D.
and the editors of
SEX, ETC., a national newsletter by teens for teens
www.sxetc.org

Published by
Network for Family Life Education
Center for Applied Psychology
Rutgers University
41 Gordon Road, Suite A
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8067
Ph: 732/445-7929
Fax: 732/445-7970
E-mail: netfle@rci.rutgers.edu

Copyright 2000

Revving Up....

Dear Fellow Student:

When we talk to other young people about their sex ed classes, we hear the same message over and over: "Too little, too late." This guide can help you change that in your high school.

The Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, developed this guide, along with our advice and support. It all started when the teen editors of **SEX, ETC.** realized that many young people had a common complaint. Their sex ed classes, they said, failed to give them the information and skills they need to navigate a world saturated in sex. We saw a connection.

SEX, ETC., a national newsletter written by teens for teens, is used in thousands of health and sexuality classes around the country to get students talking about important stuff, like relationships and making smart choices. We thought a guide, designed to help students get better sex ed in their schools, would be a great extension of the work that **SEX, ETC.** already does. Like **SEX, ETC.**, this guide gives young people a voice in the debate over young people's sexuality and gives them a say in their own education.

It puts the power in your hands to get the information and skills you need to graduate from high school pregnancy and disease free.

This guide gives you a step-by-step action plan for getting your community to start talking about teenage sexuality and sex ed. It gives you tools for finding out what type of education your fellow students feel they need. And, it tells you what makes a good sex ed class.

If you follow the steps in this guide, you can at least start a challenging discussion in your community. At best, you can help steer the sexuality education program at your school in a new direction. At least, you can get adults and youth talking.

With today's young people facing tons of pressures, as well as being bombarded with images of sex on everything from the nightly news to prime-time TV, your role as a student activist is crucial. Only when young people speak up and say, "We need honest, accurate information, along with good decision-making skills," can we hope to change the state of sexuality education in American high schools.

Thanks for having the courage and the concern to take on this project. It could be a long, tough road trip, but stick to your map. Be persistent and try not to get discouraged if change happens one mile at a time. If you're patient and persistent, chances are you'll eventually make it to your destination. Call the Network for Family Life Education with concerns or if you need help (contact information is on the front page). And be sure to let us know how this guide works for you. Good luck!

Best Wishes,

The Editors of **SEX, ETC.**



How to Use *THE ROADMAP*

When you first start reading *The Roadmap*, you might feel a little overwhelmed. We have provided a lot of information and a lot of instruction on what you should do. That's because we want to be as thorough as possible.

But we realize that you may be tackling a lot of this alone. And that you won't always get cooperation from your school officials.

So, the best attitude to use in approaching this guide is: Be realistic. And be happy with small steps.

There is one thing you absolutely must do before you get started. You must read the first section, "Tools for the Road," which provides basic — but crucial — information about sex ed, teen sexuality and other issues. So, before you even turn the key, read this section.

Next, you might want to take one piece of the guide (the student survey or community forum, for example) and start figuring out how to get it done. If you finish only your one chosen piece of the journey during the school year, that will be a victory. You — and other students — can build on the project from year to year.

Remember that you, as an advocate, have certain rights. You shouldn't quit just because a teacher or principal discourages you (assuming that happens). You have the right to gather information. You have the right to present that information to your school board. You have the right to organize a public meeting in a public place. You have the right to petition other public bodies, such as the Parent-Teacher Association, to help you. You have the right to know your school's policies on sex ed. And, you have the right to ask your school to provide you with honest information so you can make smart choices about your future.

The Roadmap can help you do it.



A Note About the Network

This guide was developed by the Network for Family Life Education, a program located at the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Founded in 1981, the Network is a leading national advocate for comprehensive, timely family life/sexuality education in schools and communities. The Network believes that family life/sexuality education is an important part of comprehensive health education in all U.S. schools. We encourage instruction that promotes responsible, healthy behaviors, understanding relationships, building strong families and preventing teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases.

We believe that effective family life education includes instruction about abstinence, waiting to have sex, monogamy and using contraceptives to reduce the risk of disease and unplanned pregnancy. Good family life education should empower young people by teaching them how to make smart decisions, how to communicate and how to say no, if that's what they want. It should be taught by well-trained teachers who allow students to have open discussions. It should also involve parents and the community.

The Network's biggest project is ***SEX, ETC.***, a national newsletter written by teens for teens on health and sexuality issues. It started in 1994 when it circulated to about 10,000 New Jersey high school students. Today, ***SEX, ETC.*** has become part of sex ed classes across the country, with millions of copies distributed nationwide. There is also now a ***SEX, ETC.*** Web site that attracts hundreds of thousands of teens each year. In 1997, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy recognized ***SEX, ETC.*** for its success in giving teens a voice in the fight against teen pregnancy.

This guide is, in a way, an extension of ***SEX, ETC.*** In the same way that ***SEX, ETC.*** gives teens a place to have their voices heard across the country, this guide is designed to help teens be heard in their own schoolyards — where it often counts the most.

The ***SEX, ETC.***
Editorial Board

Table of Contents

SECTION I: Tools for the Road	1
• What Is An Advocate?	1
• Cruisin' Kids: Student Success Stories	2
• Mastering the Mechanics: The ABCs of Sex Ed.	4
• What Is Good Sex Ed?	5
• Checking the Gauges: Startling Stats on Teens & Sex	7
• Learning the Lingo: A Glove Compartment Glossary for Advocates.	8
• Rules for the Road: A State-by-State Breakdown of State Laws on Sexuality Education	9
• Adding Tools: A List of National Resources to Tap into Along the Road to Better Sex Ed	10
SECTION II: Choosing Your Road Crew	11
• Building Bridges: Steps for Starting a Coalition.	11
• Creating a Caravan: How to Organize Your Coalition	11
• Picking Up Passengers: A Sample Letter Appealing for Support.	13
SECTION III: Fueling Up	15
• Student Survey.	15
• Parent Survey.	18
• Community Petition.	21
SECTION IV: Rallying Your Community	23
• Tips for Staging a Community Forum	23
• Sample Flyer	25
• Sample Ad	26
• Sample Press Release.	27
• Sample Introduction.	28
SECTION V: Mapping It Out	29
• Making Your Map	29
• Sample School Board Resolution	30
• Sample School Board Proposal	30
SECTION VI: Reaching the Final Destination	31
• The Long and Winding Road: Schools & Politics.	31
• Greasing the Wheel: Tips for Working with Your School Board	32
• Checkpoints: Advocacy Action List	33

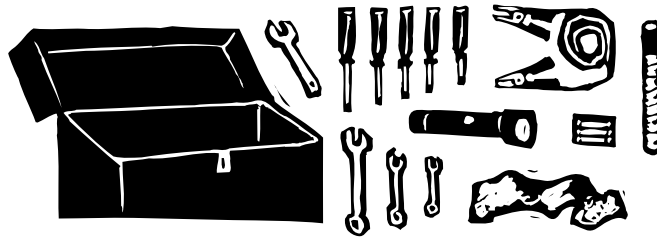


SECTION VII: Priming the Publicity Pump	35
• Tips for Working with the Media	35
• Sample Radio Public Service Announcement	36
• Sample Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed Piece	36
• Navigating the Net	38
SECTION VIII: Driving Home Your Points	39
• They Say... You Say: Answers to Frequently Argued Myths	39
• Tips for Public Speaking	41
• Sample Position Paper	42
SECTION IX: Wrestling with Roadblocks	43
SECTION X: Tooting Your Horn	45



SECTION I:

Tools for the Road



This section of the *SEX, ETC.* Student Action Guide provides the information you need to be educated and informed about the issues surrounding sexuality education. Please take the time to read and understand this information. It will help you present a smart argument for better sex ed in your schools.

- **Rules for the Road: A State-by-State Breakdown of State Laws on Sexuality Education**
- **Adding Tools: A List of National Resources to Tap into Along the Road to Better Sex Ed**

Contents:

- **What is an Advocate?**
- **Cruising Kids: Student Success Stories**
- **Mastering the Mechanics: The ABCs of Sex Ed.**
Answers to the most common questions about sexuality education.
- **What is Good Sex Ed?**
- **Checking the Gauges: Startling Stats on Teens & Sex**
- **Learning the Lingo — A Glove Compartment Glossary for Advocates.** Definitions of frequently used words.

What is an Advocate?

An advocate is someone who speaks up on behalf of him or herself or for others. They see a problem and try to push the people with the power to fix the problem to do so.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an advocate. He organized people to pressure government and society for equal rights for all people. Susan B. Anthony was an advocate. She organized people to pressure the government for the right for women to vote.

You can advocate for many causes. Say, for example, you got a “D” on a paper you wrote for English. Now maybe your paper wasn’t Shakespeare, but it wasn’t that bad either. So you decide to go see your teacher after class and try to convince her that your paper deserves at least a “C.”



You might highlight a specific point you made that you feel shows insight and understanding of what you've been learning in class. And, you never know, through your persuasion, she might begin to see your point of view. Whether you win or lose, you've just advocated on behalf of yourself. And that's a good thing.

Today, advocates exist for almost everything. Environmentalists advocate to keep the environment healthy. Child advocates try to protect the rights of children. Others advocate on behalf of senior citizens. The list can go on and on.

Advocacy is a cornerstone of democracy and it assumes a few things. Advocacy assumes that people have rights (even young people, although you may not feel that way sometimes). And it assumes that those rights are enforceable, meaning you must get what you have a right to.

Advocacy works best when it's focused on something specific (i.e., getting better sex education in school). And it's mostly concerned with rights that people already have, such as the right to accurate information about health and sexuality.

Policy advocacy is when you try to get institutions (schools) to provide those things that you have a right to and to do the job they were created for. That's what you're doing. You're advocating on behalf of yourself and your fellow students to ask your school to provide more information on a subject that deeply concerns every young person.

Success Stories

Students Get Sex Ed Newsletter

It was as simple as asking.

Mayara Mercado, 18, was a senior at Kearney High School in New Jersey when she stumbled across **SEX, ETC.**, a newsletter written by teens for teens on health and sexuality issues. She knew the straight-forward newsletter would be a great addition to her health class. It gave information about everything from relationships and dating to staying abstinent and using contraception.

"**SEX, ETC.** has information that kids need," says Mayara. "So I went to my principal and just told him about it."

Frank DiGersere, Mayara's principal, said he was interested but needed more information. So, Mayara called the Network for Family Life Education (which publishes **SEX, ETC.** and this action guide) and asked for other information about the newsletter. Network staff

sent her a packet that included research on teachers' reactions to **SEX, ETC.**, which showed, among other things, that teachers believe the newsletter has the potential to change teens' knowledge, attitudes and behavior about sex and related issues. Mr. DiGersere was sold.

"He read it and agreed to use it," says Mayara. "Now, it's in all health classes during sophomore year."



Some Students Find Success in Lobbying for Better Sex Ed

Students Convert Dull Health Classes Into Solid Sex Ed

When students at Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, IA, asked their school board for a new sex education program that included putting condoms in the nurse's office and bathrooms, there was an uproar.

"The only part people focused on was the condoms," explains Paul Engler, a senior who led the campaign for better sex ed. "They said, 'What are you nuts?'"

So the students said, OK, if we can't have condoms, then give us better sexuality education so we can make the right choices. The school board and parents agreed.

"The dialogue was tremendous," remembers Paul. "We said, 'We have this problem. We want to address this problem and condoms are a proven way to do it effectively.' They said, 'Handing out condoms teaches teens to have sex.' But they didn't dispute there was a problem."

So now, instead of health classes that focus primarily on safe subjects — how to eat right and exercise — Roosevelt High has a peer education program that has trained teens on talking to their schoolmates about contraception, HIV and STDs.

"Our school district was pretty conservative," says Paul. "Each teacher taught different topics. There was no teacher training. They used books that had pages torn out. We created lesson plans that deal with controversial issues. And it's a more open dialogue because it's students who are teaching the course."

"We did a lot of research on the problems of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases," adds Paul. "I talked to a lot of administrators and did a lot of calling within the school district. I had to find out all the procedures of

how sex education is implemented, what should be implemented, and what was being used in other districts.”

One of the big objections, especially with the condom availability plan, was that giving teens condoms and information about sex encourages them to go out and have some.

“We had research from scientific journals that showed there was no connection between comprehensive sex ed or condom distribution and teens having sex,” says Josh Mandelbaum, a senior also involved with the campaign for better sex ed. “Some studies showed that kids were less likely to have sex when they knew more about sex.”

Soliciting Support

The teens, including the student council, enlisted the aid of local groups that supported their cause, like an AIDS program. They also talked to health teachers and parents.

They developed specific goals. In addition to making condoms available, they wanted health teachers to be trained, the curriculum to be updated and programs to be created for each grade, including information and counseling available for all students on rape and sexual abuse.

At a school board meeting, the students distributed nearly 30 pages of national research on teens, sex education and condom availability.

One of the ways they sold the new sex ed program was by focusing on the school’s needs. For example, physical education teachers had too many teens to teach. So students suggested training teens to teach their peers. The overloaded phys ed teachers thought that was a great idea.

In the end, district officials shot down the idea of making condoms available, but they did pass a whole new sexuality education program.

“That part passed unanimously, which was amazing,” says Paul. “There was no political pressure to change our program. So the students created that pressure. It worked.”

Reprinted from SEX, ETC., Fall 1997

Teens Get Parents, Teachers Talking About Sex

By Hanna Ingber

We didn’t get what we asked for, but we still won.

Our request? To get school officials to make condoms available at Goshen High School in New York. They refused. But we did get everyone talking — and that was no small victory.

Goshen is a small, conservative town filled with Victorian houses, friendly neighbors and pretty, preppy students. Even though it’s only 60 miles north of New York City, many see the town as untouched by the troubles that plague city schools.

So we, a small group of high school students, awakened our community to the fact that, despite the many lectures on abstinence, Goshen High School teens are having sex. And worse, they’re having unprotected sex.

Our group, known as the Goshen High School Condom Availability Committee, started working on this issue in fall 1998. We wanted condoms available either through dispensers in the bathrooms or in the nurse’s office. We planned to present our proposal to the school board and leave it at that. We never expected to stir up trouble.

From the beginning, school officials disliked the idea. They were afraid they would be seen as saying teen sex is OK, that parents would get angry and that the community would become divided over this controversial issue.

To us, it felt like they gave us “the run-around.” They gave us assignments that ranged from seeking the support of ineffective district-wide advisory boards to gathering more and more statistics.

It was not until January 1999, 1 ½ years later, after countless meetings with advisory boards and administrators, that our committee finally decided to take things into our own hands. Since we had completed every task they had thrown at us and followed all their rules, we decided it was time to fend for ourselves. We organized a public meeting.

We realized that even though we might never get condoms in our schools, our town needed to talk about this issue. We wanted the chance to tell our school board and our parents how serious the issue of unprotected sex is.

The forum was organized completely by students, except for the help of one teacher. We reserved auditorium space, lined up speakers for our panel, researched every part of the issue and publicized our event without guidance or support of the school. We worked hard.

The media was the only outlet that helped us. Many criticized the media, saying its front-page coverage of students holding condoms in the high school parking lot sensationalized the issue. Maybe so, but it brought needed attention to the issue. The newspapers and the radio helped awaken Orange County to our efforts to get condoms in our school and got people to attend our forum. The community’s initial response was mostly negative and hostile. The forum changed that.

The meeting somehow did not turn into the heated argument that most feared. Instead, it was a true exchange of ideas and opinions. Although the 200 people at the meeting were split on whether condoms were the best answer, after three hours of talking they found some common ground.

People started talking about how to deal with students having unprotected sex. The exchange of ideas was the best thing to come out of our efforts. Every person who

read the newspapers, listened to the radio and attended the forum, was thinking and talking about the problems of teen pregnancy and STDs.

We may not have gotten condoms at Goshen High School, but we got our community to really think about the issue. And that, in itself, is a victory.

*Reprinted from **SEX, ETC.**, Fall 1999*

Mastering the Mechanics: The ABCs of Sex Ed

To make a difference, you have to understand basic facts about sex ed. Here are answers to common questions about sexuality education.

What is sexuality education?

Sexuality education goes by a lot of names. Most young people know it as sex ed, health class or lifeskills. But it's also called family life education. Basically, it is a course that teaches students something about their sexuality. Information about sexuality can be found in consumer sciences, biology, gym and other subject areas. Sometimes sexuality education takes place within one of these subjects and sometimes it is taught as a course by itself.

Different schools typically teach different things in their sex ed courses. Sometimes, the classes teach only about abstaining from sex (called "abstinence-only or abstinence-until-marriage education"). Other times, the classes teach about a broad range of subjects — everything from abstinence to condoms, relationships and dating, to sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS and other health issues. These classes also give students skills for making smart decisions and help in figuring out how they feel and what they believe about different issues, such as waiting until marriage to have sex. This is called "comprehensive sexuality education." Most sex ed classes fall somewhere between the two.

Sexuality education can start as early as elementary school, with lessons that are appropriate for children that age. At some point, you might want to think about advocating for sexuality education in the early grades. But, for the purposes of this guide, we'll focus mainly on talking about sex ed in high schools.

Why do young people need sex education?

Sexuality is a fundamental part of every person's life. Sexual concerns can affect people's health, self-esteem, relationships and their ability to reach their goals and dreams. Without comprehensive sexuality education, young people may make bad decisions.

Does every school district have sex ed classes?

Twenty states and the District of Columbia require schools to teach sexuality education, while 35 states and the District of Columbia require schools to provide STD and/or HIV/AIDS education. (A list of states follows.) Some states require districts to provide sexuality education in grades kindergarten through 12. Most don't.

In many cases, school officials claim students are getting sex education, but students are really only learning basic anatomy during biology class, along with some lectures about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS in health class.

Why is sex ed so controversial?

For years, there has been plenty of debate over when and what young people should learn about sex. Some say that giving young people information about contraception and safer sex encourages them to have sex or gives them permission to have sex.

Research, though, doesn't back this up. Studies show sexuality education that deals with lots of topics does not encourage young people to become sexually active. In fact, it's just the opposite. Young people who get "comprehensive sexuality education" — which includes information about abstinence, contraception, relationships, health issues and teaches skills for making good decisions — are more likely to wait to have sex than teens who do not receive this kind of education.

At the same time, when sexually active youths take a comprehensive sex ed course, they are more likely to use birth control than sexually active youths who have not received this vital information.

There's another factor at play — conflicting attitudes that make it difficult for teens to get the information they need. On the one hand, Americans often feel that discussing sexual issues is taboo. Young people and adults often feel embarrassed asking questions about anything related to genital body parts, health and natural human functions, like how babies are made. Sex, for the most part, is seen as something only adults should need or want to know about.

But, switch on the television and you see that the media is full of sexual imagery and messages — just look at almost any MTV video, TV soap opera and many other shows, music and movies. This sends conflicting messages to young people. Sex is everywhere, but so few people want to talk honestly about it. That's confusing.

In many European countries, sexuality is dealt with as a more natural part of life and people aren't embarrassed discussing things related to their bodies and their natural functions. The rates of teen pregnancy and STDs are lower in those countries than in the U.S. and European teens, on average, begin to have sex later than American teens.

Who decides what type of sex ed my school has?

Usually, the local school boards make that decision, often with help from special advisory committees that look at different types of curriculum and make a recommendation to the school boards. In some states, (and this differs from state to state), the State Board of Education might pass a mandate telling schools what type of sexuality education they must offer. But, usually, this is a broad policy statement, such as that schools must use abstinence-plus programs. Then, districts can decide exactly how they want to carry out that directive.

What do parents say about sex ed?

Surveys have shown most parents want schools to teach sexuality education to their children. In most communities, polls show that nine out of 10 parents want their children to have good sexuality education. But most parents also like to be involved in that education, especially since each family has its values and beliefs. Parents often like to put their own spin on some of the stuff that's taught in class. That's why the best sex ed classes also involve parents in the process. Parents become partners, along with teachers and teens.

Other parents, though, say they should be in charge of teaching their own children about sex. They don't want schools to get involved.

Unfortunately, as you probably know, plenty of parents are too embarrassed to talk to their teenagers about sex. Parents often don't know what to say to their kids about sex. They also don't know when to bring up the subject and many times they wait too long. Also, some young people say they have a hard time talking to their parents about sex, even when their parents are open to talking about it.

What kind of sexuality education program is best for my school?

Everybody's different. We all have different values, attitudes and beliefs about sex. So, before you can say what is best for your school, you have to understand the beliefs held by people in your school and community. Basically, though, there are three areas of sexuality education programs that you will want to consider — topics, timing, and teachers. (We explain more about this in the next section.)

What can I do?

The most powerful voices come from young people. Only you know the realities. So, it's up to you to help your peers express that reality, whether it's concerns about pregnancy or peer pressure to have sex. You need to talk to the people who can give you the education you need — your parents, teachers, school board members, principals, superintendents, social workers, doctors and religious leaders. The process can be long and frustrating, but every little bit you do today will help young people tomorrow.

What is Good Sex Ed?

There are three basic components to sexuality education. Topics, timing and teachers. Here's a look at what most advocates of comprehensive sexuality education consider to be good sex ed.

Topics

Here is a list of topics that advocates of comprehensive sexuality education generally say should be part of a good sex ed class:

- **Abstinence**
- **Alcohol/drugs**
- **Anatomy and physiology of male and female reproductive systems**
- **Communication**
- **Conception, pregnancy, birth**
- **Contraception**
- **Dating**
- **Dating violence/sexual harassment/sexism**
- **Decision-making skills**
- **Divorce**
- **Feelings and fears**
- **Gender roles**

- **Getting along with parents**
- **HIV/AIDS**
- **Homophobia**
- **Intimacy/love/marriage**
- **Masturbation**
- **Mental health**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Parenting**
- **Pregnancy choices**
(abortion, adoption, teen parenting)
- **Rape/incest/sexual assault**
- **Relationships/dating**
- **Refusal skills**
- **Safer sex strategies**
- **Sexual desire**
(kissing, petting, sexual fantasies)
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Sex in the media**
- **Sexual intercourse** (what it is)
- **Sexually transmitted diseases**
- **Suicide**
- **Values**

Timing

Many sexuality educators say that sexuality education should start in elementary school and go right on through high school. Of course, different topics are appropriate at different times.

According to the “Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education,” published by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS), there are four stages of development. They are:

- Level 1: Middle childhood**, ages five through eight, early elementary school
- Level 2: Preadolescence**, ages nine through 12, upper elementary school
- Level 3: Early adolescence**, ages 12 through 15, middle school/junior high school
- Level 4: Adolescence**, ages 15 through 18, high school

The guidelines offer suggestions for topics to be taught at each level. They identify six broad areas that should be covered. They are: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. You can get the guidelines from SIECUS (see address on Page 10).

Under the topic of reproduction (a part of human development), during Level 1, students might learn, for example, that reproduction requires a man and a woman. At Level 2, they might learn it is possible for a woman

to become pregnant through sexual intercourse. Level 3 calls for educating students about contraception. During Level 4, students might learn that some people are unable to reproduce due to physiological reasons and what new reproductive technologies are available.

Teachers

Key to any good sex ed class is the teacher. (But we don’t have to tell you that.) Are your health teachers trained professionals who are comfortable talking to students about sex? Or are they sweating through a class they’d rather not have to teach? Teacher training is an important part of sexuality education and it may be one of the things wrong with your health classes. Health teachers must know their facts — or where to go to get them.

A trained sexuality education teacher uses the following methods to teach teens about sex:

1. **Information and Fact-Giving.** Information is power. When people have good information, they make better decisions. They also better understand the consequences of their actions. Without information, people cannot make the best choices for their own lives.
2. **Discussion.** New information can be hard to understand. Students need to talk about the information they receive to figure out what it means for them. Through discussions, students should be able to answer questions like: Is this information relevant to my life? How can I use this information? How do I feel about this information?
3. **Teaching Techniques.** Sexuality teachers should use different types of exercises to help teens explore how they feel about different issues. Many teachers use techniques like role-playing, group discussions or having a “question box” in the classroom where students can anonymously ask sensitive questions.
4. **Peer Education.** Sometimes, when young people have questions or concerns about sensitive topics like sex, it’s a lot easier for them to talk to someone close to their own age. Unfortunately, most young people are as clueless as their friends and they wind up teaching each other a lot of wrong and sometimes dangerous information about sex.

Peer educators are teenagers who are trained and educated to talk to their friends about sexuality. They take a training class to learn how to answer questions about sex and to direct their peers to clinics, health centers and appropriate adults when necessary. Peer educators can really help spread factual information about sexual health and they can do a lot of myth-busting in the process.

Checking the Gauges: Startling Stats on Teens & Sex

Young people in America need accurate information and behavioral skills about their sexuality. Here's why:

Teens & Pregnancy

- Nationally, about 880,000 teenagers became pregnant in 1996 (the latest year for which statistics are available). (1)
- Of those 880,000 teens, about half give birth, 35 percent chose abortion and the rest miscarry. (Very few choose adoption.) (1)
- American teens get pregnant more often than teens in any other part of the developed world, including England, France, Holland and Sweden. (2)

Teens & Abstinence

- The percentage of teens who say they've had sex dropped from 1988 to 1995. By comparison, the percentage of teens having sex had increased steadily up to 1988. Experts say better sex education has a lot to do with this. (4)
- One in two teens has been in a situation when he/she could have had sexual intercourse with someone they liked but decided not to at the time. (8)

Teens & Sex

- The average age of first sexual intercourse is about 17 for girls and 16 for boys. (4)
- The older the teen, the more likely it is that they're having sex. (4)
- But, the percentage of teen girls having sex at younger ages is on the rise — increasing from 11 percent between 1979 and 1988 to 19 percent between 1988 and 1995. (4)

Teens & Contraception

- A sexually active teen who doesn't use contraception has a 90 percent chance of getting pregnant within one year. (2)
- Surveys have shown that in the late 1980s and 1990s there has been a rise in teens' use of condoms. Some studies show a 50 percent increase. (4)

- But there's still lots of room for improvement — 58 percent of teens who have had sex report not using contraception every time they have sex. More than a third have never talked with a sexual partner about preventing pregnancy. (8)

Teens & Children

- One-third of pregnant teens receive inadequate prenatal care; babies born to young mothers are more likely to be low birth weight, to have childhood problems and to be hospitalized than those born to older women. (2)
- Teen mothers are less likely to go to college and more likely to live in poverty. (2)

Teens & Sex Ed

- There is no reliable research that shows that "abstinence-only" programs help teens wait to have sex. Some studies suggest they do not. (9)
- Studies have shown that "comprehensive" sexuality education can help teens wait longer to have sex and to be more responsible when they do decide to have sex. (9)

Teens & Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

- Teens get STDs. One out of every four — or 3 million — sexually active teens gets infected with an STD each year. (2)
- More teens have chlamydia and gonorrhea than older men and women. (11)
- Teenage girls land in the hospital more often than older women for acute pelvic inflammatory disease, which is often caused by untreated gonorrhea or chlamydia. (11)

Teens & HIV/AIDS

- Young people are getting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, faster than any other group. One-half of all new HIV infections in the U.S. hit people who are younger than 25. (3)
- HIV is growing fastest among young straight women, ages 13 to 19. Of all AIDS cases among teens, girls now make up 46 percent of them. (3)

- Even though 80 percent of U.S. schools teach facts about HIV/AIDS, less than half teach teens how to use a condom and only about half give information about where people can get help and counseling. (3)

Teens & Sexual Abuse

- Many young teens don't have sex willingly. Seven in 10 women who had sex before age 14, and 6 in 10 of those who had sex before age 15, say they had sex against their will. (2)
- Most children are abused by someone they know and trust, although boys are more likely than girls to be abused outside of the family. (10)
- Almost half of all teens say they have done something sexual, or felt pressure to do something sexual, they did not feel they were ready to do. (8)

Teens & Substance Abuse

- 80 percent of teens say they've used alcohol. (6)
- 32 percent of teens say they have used marijuana. (6)
- Teens whose first sexual intercourse is unplanned are more likely to say they drank before having sex. They are also less likely to use contraception. (5)

Teens & Homosexuality

- Experts estimate that about 10 percent of people are gay.
- Teens who have had sex with someone of the same gender are more likely to attempt suicide, skip school because they feel unsafe, be threatened with a weapon at school, smoke cigarettes, binge on alcohol and use marijuana. (7)
- Studies show that gay youth often feel isolated from family and friends. As a result, they often turn to drugs and alcohol. (12)

Note: You can use these statistics to help prove that teens need good sex ed. Use stats to back up your points in your presentation or when you're talking to school board members. Remember to give the source of the statistic.

Sources:

1. *Teenage Pregnancy, Overall Trends and State-by-State Information*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, April 1999.
2. *Sex and America's Teenagers*, Alan Guttmacher, Institute, New York City, 1994.
3. *Dangerous Inhibitions: How America Is Letting AIDS Become An Epidemic of the Young*, Center for AIDS Prevention Studies, University of California, February 1997.
4. *Teenage Sexual Behavior and Contraceptive Use: An Update*, Abma and Freya, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and The Urban Institute, April 1998.
5. *Trends in Sexual Risk Behavior Among High School Students*, United States, 1990, 1991 and 1993.
6. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*, Centers for Disease Control Summaries, 1995.
7. *The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 1995.
8. *The Kaiser Family Foundation/YM Magazine National Survey of Teens*, March 1998.
9. *No Easy Answers*, Douglas Kirby, Ph.D., for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, March 1997.
10. *Child Rape Victims*, 1991, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
11. *Testing Positive: Sexually Transmitted Disease and the Public Health Response*, Patricia Donovan, Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York City, 1993.
12. HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, New York State Psychiatric Institute, 1992.

Glossary of Terms for Advocates

Abstinence — Choosing not to have sex.

Abstinence-Based Education — Educational programs that teach abstinence are the best choice for young people. They also discuss sexual issues, like contraception and safer sex.

Abstinence-Only/Abstinence-Until-Marriage Education — Classes that teach young people to wait until they are married to have sex. Usually includes no discussion of contraception, except to say it doesn't work. Often teaches that sex outside of marriage is psychologically, physically and emotionally harmful. The federal government is now spending about \$250 million per year on these programs.

Advocate — Someone who calls attention to problems and asks people in charge — lawmakers, governors, school board members — to address those problems.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education — Classes that encourage young people to wait until they're older to have sex, but if they decide to have sex, be responsible. (Use protection every time you have sex.) They try to teach young people how to make smart decisions. This approach encourages group discussions about issues like abstinence. And they tend to approach sexuality as a natural part of human development.

Condom-Availability Programs — Makes condoms available to high school students in school. Good programs include counseling. Some research suggests they are very effective in reducing pregnancy and disease, but very few schools have such a program.

Fear-Based Sexuality Education — Programs that use scare tactics to keep young people from having sex. These programs discuss only the negative, dangerous parts of sex. They exaggerate the risks of sexual behaviors to make sex seem more frightening.

HIV/AIDS Education — Classes that discuss how HIV is transmitted and how to protect yourself from becoming infected with this virus. These courses may include information about safer sex and condom use (including demonstration and instruction on condom use), but many simply use scare tactics and offer little information about coping with real-life sexual situations. Many states now have laws that force schools to provide HIV/AIDS education.

Mandate — An order or instruction given by a legislative body, such as your state legislature, your school board or state board of education. Often these mandates do not spell out how much information should be taught or even what topics should be taught. There is also rarely any method for determining if students have received and learned the information outlined in the mandate. It's basically a broad statement of policy, but sometimes government also provides money to carry out the mandate.

Opt-In or Opt-Out — Most schools tell parents when their children will be taking a sex ed course. School officials usually send a letter home. In some school districts, parents have to sign and return a permission slip in order for their children to be allowed to take the course. That's called opt-in. In other districts, school officials simply notify parents that the child will be taking the course. If parents object, it's up to them to write the school to say they want their children to skip the course. That's called opt-out. Opt-in programs tend to get less students participating because it means parents have to actively decide to allow their children to take the course.

Safer Sex — Being responsible about sex by doing things that reduce your chances of getting an STD or becoming pregnant. Usually, this means using a condom during intercourse and/or choosing partners carefully. Recognizes that no sex is completely "safe" or risk free.

Values — Strongly-held personal beliefs, attitudes and feelings that guide the way you behave and the decisions you make (i.e. honesty is a value that could translate into refusing to help your friend cheat on a test). Values, such as responsibility and kindness, are often learned from our families, religious institutions, schools and society.

Rules for the Road: A State-by-State Breakdown of State Laws on Sexuality Education

As of January 2000, states had the following laws regarding sexuality education:

- Only 19 states, including the District of Columbia, require schools to provide sexuality education (DC, DE, GA, IA, IL, KS, KY, MD, MN, NC, NJ, NM, NV, RI, SC, TN, UT, VT, WV).
- Of the 19 states that require schools to provide sexuality education, nine require that sexuality education teach abstinence and provide information about contraception (DE, GA, NJ, NC, RI, SC, TN, VT, WV). Of these nine states four specify abstinence until marriage education (GA, NC, SC, TN).
- Thirty-five states, including the District of Columbia, require schools to provide STD, HIV, and/or AIDS education (AL, CA, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IL, IA, IN, KS, KY, MD, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, UT, VT, WA, WV, WI).
- Of the 35 states that require schools to provide STD, HIV, and/or AIDS education. 23 require that STD, HIV, and/or AIDS education teach abstinence and other methods of prevention (AL, CA, DE, FL, GA, IL, KY, MI, MN, MO, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OK, OR, PA, RI, TN, UT, VT, WA, WV). Of these 23 states, ten specify abstinence until marriage education (FL, GA, IL, MN, MO, NC, NY, TN, UT, WA).

*Source: National Abortion Rights Action League
A State-by-State Review of Abortion and Reproductive Rights, 2000.*

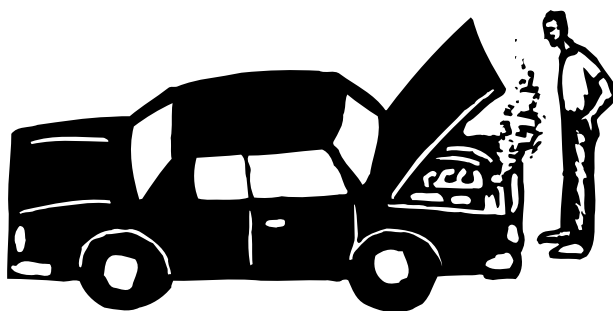
Adding Tools: A List of National Resources to Tap into Along the Road to Better Sex Ed

If you need more information, you can contact any of the following organizations. They can provide more information on specific subjects. They can also point you to recent research and other reports that might help you along the road to better sex ed.

1. **Advocates for Youth**, 1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005, ph: 202/347-5700, fax: 202/347-2263, Web site: advocatesforyouth.org. A nonprofit organization devoted to providing adolescents with correct information about sexuality and related subjects.
2. **Alan Guttmacher Institute**, 120 Wall St., New York, NY 10005, ph: 212/248-1111, fax: 212/248-1951, Web site: agi-usa.org. A nonprofit organization that does research on reproductive health, policy analysis and public education. Has tons of research on teen pregnancy, teen sexual behavior and other related issues.
3. **American Public Health Association**, 800 I St., NW, Washington, DC 20001, ph: 202/777-2742, fax: 202/777-2534, Web site: apha.org. Information on how to advocate for public health issues.
4. **American School Health Association**, 7263 State Route 43, P.O. Box 708, Kent, OH 44240, ph: 330/678-1601, fax: 330/678-4526, Web site: ASHAweb.org. Provides information on school health programs.
5. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, 1600 Clifton Rd., Atlanta, GA 30333, ph: 404/639-3311, Web site: cdc.gov. Has information about AIDS and sexually transmitted disease.
6. **Local and State Health Departments** can also provide statistics for your state or town. Check your local phone book in the pages that list government agencies.
7. **National Assembly on School-Based Health Care**, 666 11th St., NW, Suite 735, Washington, DC 20001, ph: 202/638-5872, fax: 202/638-5879. A group that supports health services in schools. Can provide information about these programs.
8. **National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**, 2100 M Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20037, ph: 202/261-5655, fax: 202/331-7735, Web site: teenpregnancy.org. A group that's trying to reduce teen pregnancy by one-third by 2005. Can help with finding groups and programs in your area with similar goals.
9. **National School Boards Association, HIV/AIDS Education and School Health Programs**, 1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, ph: 703/838-6722, fax: 703/683-7590, Web site: nsba.org. Information on school policy and planning.
10. **National Youth Advocacy Coalition**, 1711 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 206, Washington, DC 20009, ph: 202/319-7596, fax: 202/319-7365. Web site: youthresource.com. Information on gay and lesbian issues.
11. **Network for Family Life Education**, Center for Applied Psychology, Rutgers University, 41 Gordon Road, Suite A, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8067, ph: 732/445-7929, fax: 732/445-7970, Web site: sxetc.org. Can provide a wide range of information and technical support as you move through the process of advocating for better sexuality education.
12. **Planned Parenthood Federation of America**, 810 7th Ave., New York, NY 10019, ph: 800/829-PPFA, 800/230-PLAN (connects callers to the Planned Parenthood nearest you), fax: 212/247-6269, Web site: ppfa.org. A major source/resource for young people and adults.
13. **Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)**, 130 W. 42nd St., Suite 350, New York, NY 10036, ph: 212/819-9770, fax: 212/819-9776, Web site: siecus.org. Believes that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of living and advocates for the rights of people to make responsible choices. A great resource for information backing comprehensive sexuality education for teens.

SECTION II:

Choosing Your Road Crew



While it's possible for you to advocate on your own, there's strength in numbers. This section explains how to get others involved in your cause.

Contents:

- **Building Bridges: Steps for Starting a Coalition**
- **Creating a Caravan.** How to Organize Your Coalition
- **Picking Up Passengers: A Sample Letter Appealing for Support**

Building Bridges: Steps for Starting a Coalition

Your first step is to build a network of people who are committed to your cause and will help you navigate the road blocks and detours that you're sure to run up against. This is called a "coalition."

The following steps tell you how to create a coalition. But, if you can't get others behind the project, it is possible to begin on your own and then, hopefully, along the way, you will pick up passengers who realize how important it is to get better sex ed in your school.

Here Are Steps to Creating a Caravan:

1. **Solicit Student Support.** Since students are sitting in the driver's seat for this road trip, your first step is to get other students involved. Your best course is to get a student group in your school to take this on as its special project. The student council, an HIV/AIDS coalition, a gay/straight alliance or a peer leader group are a few likely groups that jump to mind. But, it can be any student group that really wants to work hard to convince your school officials and community that you need better sexuality education.

Another advantage of aligning with an existing student group is that they usually come with an adult advisor. Obviously, for the student group to take on the project, you'll need the cooperation of the advisor. That person can help pave the way for you to get permission from your school principal to conduct student surveys and distribute information — important things you'll need to do as you wind down the road. Student groups also often have access to your school copier, computers, telephone and other resources you'll need as you go forward.



But, also remember that if a teacher or your principal refuses to support you, you still have the right to take action. It will probably make it more difficult. But not having their support shouldn't force you to quit. For example, if you aren't allowed to meet at school, you can still gather a group in your home to plan your strategy.

2. **Map Out a Mission.** Get your student group together, along with your advisor, and agree on what piece of the guide you want to start with. You might also think about creating a "mission statement." It can be something simple: "To bring better sexuality education to students in our school." Or it can be more specific: "To get sexuality education taught in ninth grade, instead of 12th grade."
3. **Tap into Teachers.** Ask your health teacher, coach (if he/she teaches sex ed) or other teachers in your school if they would be interested in helping. They may be just as frustrated as you are with the curriculum they have to teach. If you can get them on board, you'll be miles ahead.
4. **Partner with Parents.** Believe it or not, parents are pretty powerful people in your community. They pay taxes and vote, so school officials often listen to them. And they're probably on your side. In most communities, polls show that nine out of 10 parents want their children to have good sexuality education. So talk to your school's Parent-Teacher Association (check with your school secretary for the president's name, address and phone number). Ask if you can attend a meeting to make a short presentation about your project and to solicit advice and support. Also have every member of your student group and your friends talk to their parents and ask them to help.
5. **Ask About an Advisory Committee.** Many districts have advisory committees that make recommendations about sexuality education in your schools. Ask your school secretary whether your district has one. If so, get the name, address and phone number of the chairman of the board. Ask if you can attend a meeting to make a short presentation about your project and to solicit advice and support.
6. **Link with Local Organizations.** It's also helpful to reach out to other adults in the community. Your health teacher, group advisor or parents of some of the students may be able to steer you to community leaders or people who run local programs who would be interested in helping. If not, compile a list of organizations in your area and write a letter (a sample letter

follows). For help in compiling a list, check with the reference librarian in your local library. Also, ask organizations that you have identified whether they have a list of other supportive local organizations.

Here are some places to look for help in finding supportive community organizations:

1. A parents or community group that might exist to help guide education in your community (other than the PTA)
2. A local church leader who is committed to helping teenagers
3. Programs that serve youth, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Municipal Alliances
4. Programs that focus on health, like AIDS awareness coalitions and clinics that provide birth control
5. Teen pregnancy programs and coalitions
6. Service organizations, like the League of Women Voters, the Junior League, the Kiwanis Club, the 4-H, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and the Urban League, among others

The following national organizations may be able to help you find a local organization that would want to help:

1. **National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**, 2100 M Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20037, ph: 202/857-8655, fax: 202/331-7735, Web site: teenpregnancy.org.
2. **National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention, Inc. (NOAPP)**, 1319 F Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington DC, ph: 202/783-5770, fax: 202/783-5775, Web site: NOAPP.org.
3. **Planned Parenthood Federation of America**, 810 7th Ave., New York, NY 10019, ph: 800/829-PPFA, 800/230-PLAN (connects callers to the Planned Parenthood nearest you), fax: 212/247-6269, Web site: ppfa.org.
4. **Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice**, 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 1130, Washington DC 20005, ph: 202/628-7700, fax: 202/628-7716, Web site: rccr.org. A coalition of 40 national Christian, Jewish and other religious organizations that support access to reproductive health services. They can help connect you with local religious leaders who support your cause.

Picking Up Passengers: A Sample Letter Appealing for Support

(Use to contact community organizations, religious leaders, etc.)

Dear:

I am writing to ask you to support our movement to get better sexuality education in our schools — a movement crucial to making sure every young person graduates from high school pregnancy and disease free.

Consider this. Nationally, one million teenagers become pregnant each year — translating to 2,800 teen pregnancies per day. HIV/AIDS cases are growing fastest among teens and young adults, many of whom contracted the HIV virus while teenagers. One out of every four — or 3 million — sexually active teens gets infected with a sexually transmitted disease each year.

Adults have failed to give young people the information they need to make smart choices. We are asking the school board to pass a resolution pledging its support of solid sex ed for high school students. We are also asking that changes be made to the curriculum to make this possible.

What can you do to help us? First, write or phone our school board members. Let them know you support our cause and believe students should be educated about their sexuality. Second, attend school board and community meetings to voice your support. Third, join our coalition. If you have any resources, special knowledge or other skills that would help us in our quest for better sexuality education, please contact us. We need all the partners we can get. We are planning our first meeting on _____ at _____.

Please join us.

We've enclosed a list of school board members, along with addresses and phone numbers. Also enclosed is a board meeting schedule. We hope to hear your voice added to the chorus of people calling out for an end to silence and shame about a subject that will affect our future. We deserve to graduate from high school pregnancy and disease free. We hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

SECTION III: Fueling Up



This section of the guide will help you gather the information you need to map out a route to success. It will help you discover how students, parents and others in your community feel about sex ed.

Contents:

- **Student Survey.** Ask your fellow students what kind of information they need.
- **Parent Survey.** Find out how parents feel about sexuality education.
- **Community Petition.** Get your community to sign on for comprehensive sexuality education.

Student Survey: How to Use the Student Survey

You can use the following survey to find out what kind of information and skills students in your school say they need. Make enough copies of the survey to send one home with every student in your school. Ask your principal if you can distribute the surveys to students through the home room teachers.

Ask students to return the surveys to school. Designate a place where they can leave the surveys. (The main office is probably a good idea if your principal agrees.) Collect the returned surveys every day to reduce the chances that any get lost.

If your principal won't give you permission to distribute and collect the surveys, then you can distribute them outside school as students are coming and going. You can have students return the surveys to a particular locker, for example. Be creative. Don't let an uncooperative administrator stop you from having a say in your own education.

This is simply supposed to give you an idea of what students in your school think about your current sex ed and what kind of information they need. It is not a scientific survey.

But it does tell you what kind of information students feel they need. You should present this information to the school board and ask them to provide the information that students in your school have asked for.

Student Survey

Sex Ed in Our School: What Do You Need to Know?

Tired of lame sex ed classes? Fill out this survey and help usher in a new era of sex ed in our school. We are circulating this survey to learn what YOU need to know about sex and health issues. We will use your responses to shape our request that the Board of Education give us better sex education classes. Please be honest and serious. This survey could be the first step in getting the education we need to make really important decisions about our lives. It's also anonymous — meaning you don't have to put your name on it unless you want to. Thanks for your help.

Survey distributed by: _____ (club or group name)

When completed, please return survey to: _____

1. Are your sex ed teachers comfortable talking about sex, relationships and other related issues:

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. In our school, sex education starts:

☐ Too Soon

☐ Too Late

☐ Just Right

3. In which grade should sex education begin? (Please note that early grades would have classes that are appropriate for their age)

☐ Before 6th grade

☐ 9th

☐ 6th

☐ 10th

☐ 7th

☐ 11th

☐ 8th

☐ 12th

4. Should our school make free condoms available to students, along with counseling on sexuality issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Do you feel that teaching students about condoms and contraception encourages teens to have sex?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Please grade our current sex ed classes: (check one)

☐ **A. Excellent.** We get all the information and skills we need, plus we have some great discussions.

☐ **B. Above Average.** We have some decent discussions and learn a lot about important issues.

☐ **C. Average.** Some of it is OK, but a lot is missing.

☐ **Below Average.** It doesn't relate to me at all.

☐ **Failed.** Didn't receive any sex education.

7. Are you able to talk to a parent or trusted adult about sex?

☐ Yes ☐ No

About You: (This section is optional. Don't fill it out if you are uncomfortable giving information about yourself.)

8. Grade: _____

9. Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

10. Have you ever felt pressured to have sex?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Have you ever felt like you didn't know enough or have the skills to make good decisions about sex?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

(anything we didn't ask that you want us to know)

If you want to get involved with our efforts to bring better sexuality education to our school, please contact:

Student Survey Tally Sheet

Use this sheet to tally the responses to your student survey.

Total # of respondents: _____

1. Are your sex ed teachers comfortable talking about sex, relationships and others related issues:

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

2. In our school, sex education starts:

	# answering	% of total
Too Soon	_____	_____
Too Late	_____	_____
Just Right	_____	_____

3. In which grade should sex education begin:

	# answering	% of total
Before 6th grade	_____	_____
6th	_____	_____
7th	_____	_____
8th	_____	_____
9th	_____	_____
10th	_____	_____
11th	_____	_____
12th	_____	_____

4. Should our school make free condoms available to students, along with counseling on sexuality issues?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

5. Does teaching about contraception encourage young people to have sex?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

6. Please grade our current sex ed classes: (check one)

	# answering	% of total
A	_____	_____
B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____
D	_____	_____
F	_____	_____

7. Can you to talk to a parent or trusted adult about sex?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

About You: (This section is optional. Don't fill it out if you are uncomfortable giving information about yourself.)

8. Grade

	# answering	% of total
9th	_____	_____
10th	_____	_____
11th	_____	_____
12th	_____	_____

9. Gender

	# answering	% of total
Male	_____	_____
Female	_____	_____

10. Have you ever felt pressured to have sex?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

11. Have you ever felt like you didn't know enough to make good decisions about sex?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____



Parent Survey

How to Use the Parent Survey

You can use the following survey to find out what parents think about sex ed in your high school.

There are several ways to get the survey to parents. Each has advantages and disadvantages and some will be easier than others, depending on the amount of support you have from your school officials.

- 1. Mail It.** If you have lots of money and time you could mail a survey and a self-addressed stamped envelope to each parent. (Use your school directory to get the addresses.) You will probably need permission from the principal to do this. Depending on the size of the school, this could be very expensive and time consuming.
- 2. Stuff Backpacks.** With permission from the principal, you could send the survey home with students and have parents either mail it to you or have their son/daughter bring it back to school and put it in a specified location (a box in the main office, for example). Would the majority of kids give this to their parents? Would they bring it back? You are the best judge of that.
- 3. Table It.** You could stand outside of school on Back-to-School night or during any other school event that parents attend and hand out copies of the survey with an address printed on it so that parents know what to do with it after they complete it. Or better yet, have them fill it out right there on the spot. You may still need permission from the principal to be on school grounds.
- 4. Network.** Without a cooperative adult helping you, this job becomes more difficult. You may need to talk to your friends and ask them to give the survey to their parents. You will not get as many responses, and your results might be a bit biased, but you will have something to present to the school board.

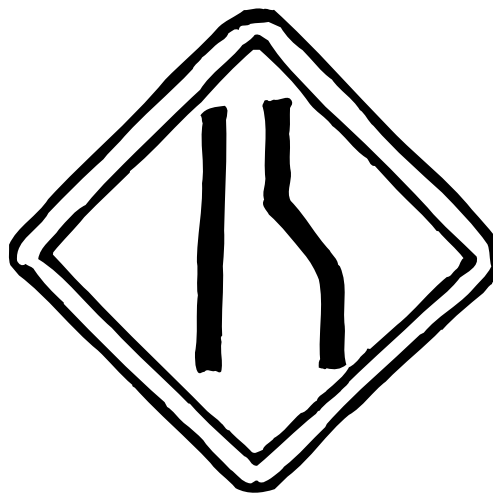
***Note:** If you are asking parents to mail their responses to you, you may want to think about getting a post office box. They're not very expensive. You can get an application at your local post office. And, if school officials are hostile to your project, they may not give you the letters mailed to you at school. Also, it may be better not to use a student's home address if you think your project is going to make some people really angry.*

How to Use the Information

The information you'll find out with this survey is basically like a "temperature reading" of parents in your community. It'll tell you what they object to and what they support when it comes to sex ed. This is not a scientific survey. Instead, it's a way to understand what parents in your community think about this issue.

You can use this information to help you make a pitch to the school board. Say, for example, that many parents support comprehensive sexuality education for their children. You'll also be able to say to your school board, "XX percentage of parents responding to our survey support sexuality education in schools."

A sheet follows that will help you tabulate the results of the survey.



Parent Survey Sex Ed in High School: What Do You Think?

As students at _____ school, we are interested in knowing how the parents in our community feel about sexuality education. We are currently looking at the programs offered at our school and would like to know your views on this important subject. We may use this information to persuade the school board to reconsider the type of sex ed we receive.

We are asking that all responses be returned no later than: _____. Please do not put your name on the survey. It is completely anonymous. If, however, you would like to get more involved in helping us bring better sexuality education to our students or if you have questions about this survey, please contact:

1. Do you think there should be sexuality education in the schools?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. In which grade do you think age-appropriate sexuality education should be taught? (check all that apply)

☐ Before 6th grade

☐ 6th

☐ 7th

☐ 8th

☐ 9th

☐ 10th

☐ 11th

☐ 12th

☐ Not at school

3. Would you be interested in participating in a program for parents about how to talk to your child about sex?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Do you think teaching young people about contraception encourages them to have sex?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Do you want your children to learn about safer sex, contraception, abstinence and other aspects of human sexuality?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Please use this space to express any other feelings you have about sexuality education in our school.

Thanks very much for your time in answering these questions.

Parent Survey Tally Sheet

Use this sheet to tally the responses you received to the survey.

Total # of respondents: _____

1. Do you think there should be sexuality education in the schools?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

2. In which grade do you think sexuality education should be taught?

	# answering	% of total
Before 6th grade	_____	_____
6th	_____	_____
7th	_____	_____
8th	_____	_____
9th	_____	_____
10th	_____	_____
11th	_____	_____
12th	_____	_____
Not at school	_____	_____

3. Would you be interested in participating in a program for parents about sexuality education?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

4. Do you think teaching young people about contraception encourages them to have sex?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

5. Do you want your children to learn about safer sex, contraception, abstinence and other aspects of human sexuality?

	# answering	% of total
Yes	_____	_____
No	_____	_____

Any additional comments should be compiled into a series of quotes to give a cross-section of views on this subject.



Community Petition

(Instructions: Circulate this petition throughout your school and community. Have copies available at the Community Forum for people to sign. Present it to your school board. This petition is meant to show the level of support for sexuality education. You can use it later when you get ready to make a presentation to the school board.)

I believe that our young people need solid information and skills to make smart decisions about their sexuality. We support age-appropriate health and sexuality education in the high school. We also support (group name)'s effort to bring better, more timely and accurate sexuality education to the high school.

[illegible]

SECTION IV:

Rallying Your Community



This section tells how to organize a community meeting about sexuality education. It includes:

- **Tips for Staging a Community Forum**
- **Sample Flyer**
- **Sample Ad**
- **Sample Press Release**
- **Sample Introduction**

Tips for Staging a Community Forum

A community forum can help start an important conversation between parents, school officials, young people and others in the community. Just igniting this important conversation is a victory in itself. And, often, once the conversation begins, it can lead to solutions, and better sexuality education.

This is also a chance for students to be heard, for them to explain to adults the problems they face and the help they need. So, you want to make sure you get the

word out to everybody — parents, teachers, students, community and religious leaders, board members and school officials.

If you can, try to get some adults involved in planning the forum. A good organization to tap into for this type of event is your local League of Women Voters. They want to encourage meaningful public debate, which goes a long way toward supporting a democratic system. Be sure to call your local league and ask for advice and support.

But, remember, if you can't find an adult who will help, you can do this on your own. You have every right to organize a public meeting, use a public space and invite students, parents and other community members.

Here's how to do it:

1. **Pick a Date.** Make it convenient. Week nights at about 7 p.m. usually work best. Before setting your date, check with the town clerk and school secretary to be sure there are no other meetings scheduled for that day. If there are, pick another day.
2. **Pick a Place.** Ask your school principal if you can hold the meeting in your school's cafeteria or auditorium. If that's not possible, check with the town clerk

to see if you can use a municipal meeting room. Other potential meeting places include churches or local organizations that are sympathetic to your cause. You will probably need a sound system with at least two microphones — one for the moderator and one for the speakers. You will also need some newsprint or posterboard. Index cards and a tape recorder are also a good idea.

3. **Advertise.** Fill out the “Community Forum Flyer” and distribute it. Just fill in the date and make copies. Distribute flyers to your classmates (stick them inside lockers or put a stack in the cafeteria). Post them around town, in area businesses and the supermarket. Give them to teachers, parents, churches, and local organizations. Deliver them to your school district offices and make sure your school superintendent and school board members get copies.
4. **Publicize.** If you have a school newspaper, submit a version of the “Community Forum Ad” and “Community Forum Press Release” that is part of this kit. You should personalize each form so it fits your particular situation, but both give you a good blueprint. Also submit the same ad and press release to your local newspaper. Call the editors of your local newspaper and invite them to send a reporter. (See “Working with the Media” section.)
5. **Make a Plan.** You’ll need a format so that everyone gets a chance to speak. Set up a microphone at one end of the stage or at the front of the room. People who want to speak will line up at the microphone and will be given only five minutes to speak. You’ll need a time-keeper and a moderator — someone who can keep people on track and handle things if they get out of hand. It’s also a good idea to have the health teacher or someone else at the meeting who can answer questions about the existing sex ed program.
6. **Set the Stage.** You’ll need to get the meeting started about 15 minutes after the designated time (to give everyone a chance to get there). Use the “Community Forum Introduction” to tell everyone who you are and what you hope to accomplish that evening. Lay down the following ground rules.
 - Please keep your comments under five minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak. You’ll get a warning at four minutes that your time is almost up. Start wrapping up when you hear that warning. When the time-keeper calls time, please step aside from the microphone.

- Please speak for yourself. People have really strong opinions about sexuality education. Please be careful to talk only about your own personal views. Don’t make general statements about others. Also, if you’re speaking for a group, please let us know. And we ask that any groups represented here designate one speaker and let them talk for the entire group.
- Respect others’ opinions. We won’t allow name-calling and stereotyping. They’re not appropriate and, besides, it sets a bad example for the students.
- Please do not call out questions. Only those at the microphone may speak.
- If you have additional comments or concerns please print them on index cards (provide them) and hand them in during the meeting. At the end of the meeting these will be read.

7. **Let Them Talk.** Allow each speaker his turn, but be sure they abide by the rules. You also need to set a time when the meeting is over, even if everyone hasn’t said their piece. Announce this time before the first speaker starts.
8. **Record It.** Use a tape recorder so you can listen to the comments later. Also, give someone from your group the job of “reporter” for the evening. That person should take detailed notes of what each speaker says and then write an account of the evening, focusing on the primary concerns and issues raised. This will show you what people are most worried about and what you need to do to address those concerns. You may want to have someone list a summary of comments on a large notepad so that your audience can see that all concerns are being accepted and treated fairly.
9. **Learn from It.** The forum will help you better understand what roadblocks stand between you and solid sex ed. It will also give you information to present to school board members. If, for example, many speakers supported the idea of providing more information and skills to teens, this is something you can cite as you appeal to the school board for better sex ed.

What Should Our Schools Teach Teens About Sex?

A Community Forum
Sponsored by

Students at (Your School Name) are concerned about the quality of the current sexuality education courses offered at our school. We are asking parents, teachers, students, community and religious leaders, school board members, local officials and people from interested organizations to join us for an evening of thoughtful discussion on this important subject.

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

The public is invited to attend. Each speaker will be given 5 minutes to voice opinions, suggestions, and concerns.

What Should Teens Learn in School About Sex?

A COMMUNITY FORUM

Sponsored by:

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____



Community Forum Press Release

For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

(Name of someone from your group designated to work with the press)

Date:

(Your Group Name) Plans Community Forum on Sex Ed in High School

(Town Name) — In an effort to bring better sexuality education to (town name) youths, the (group name) is sponsoring a community forum on sex ed in high school on (date) at (time) at (place). The meeting is open to the public and will feature a discussion of what should be taught in today's health and sexuality classes.

"Young people today face real pressures," said (group president). "More teens are getting pregnant, contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and experimenting with sex earlier."

"Young people need more accurate information and better skills to make the right decisions so they graduate from high school disease and pregnancy free. We want to get parents, teachers and the community involved in deciding what information should be included in our health classes. We also want to talk about how and when it should be taught."

Anyone who wants to weigh in will be given a chance to speak. The district's health teachers will also be on hand to answer questions about the current curriculum.



Community Forum Introduction

This is a suggested introduction to kick off your community forum. You can tailor it to fit your situation and personality. It's just a suggestion.

Hi, my name is (your name) and I'm a member of (your organization). We are concerned about the high teen pregnancy rate, the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS among young people and the large number of young people who feel confused about dating, relationships, sex, contraception and abstinence. We believe that young people are entitled to graduate from high school pregnancy and disease free. We also believe they need information and skills to achieve those goals.

Currently, our sexuality education classes are offered in grades (fill in grades). They provide information on (fill in subjects). We're holding this forum so we can hear from the community on this important subject. We want to know, do you think this is enough? Too much? Not enough? What should our schools be teaching youth about sex?

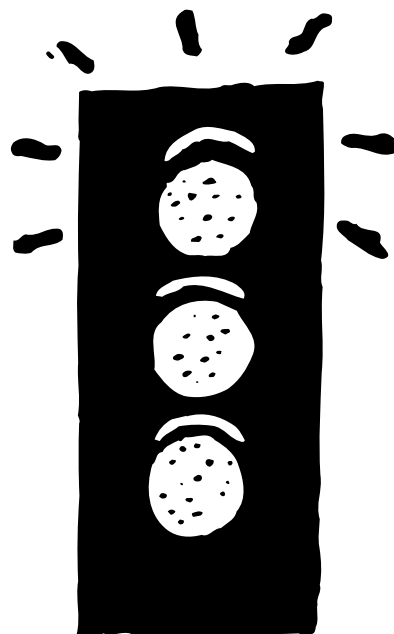
We don't expect to come up with any specific plan tonight. Instead, we are hoping to start a productive dialogue between students, parents, teachers, school officials and others in the community. We do plan to use information and opinions expressed here to shape a proposal on sexuality education that we are currently creating for our school board. (If you've completed your surveys at this point, you can also share this information with the group.)

Please be considerate of others. We have set a five (5) minute time limit per speaker so that everyone has a chance to offer their views. Please respect this limit. Also, (name of health teacher) is available to answer questions about our current courses.

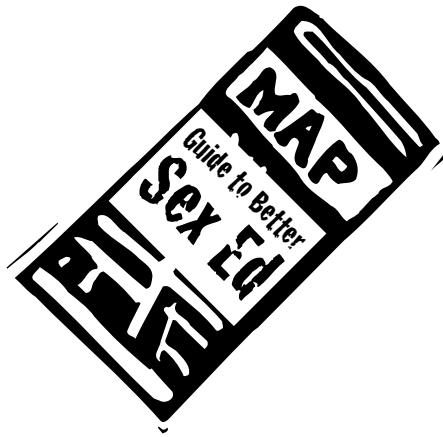
(Take this opportunity to say the meeting will end promptly at whatever time you decide. If you don't do this, you could be there all night. You should also state your position on the issue of sexuality education in your school. Remember to abide by your own 5-minute time limit!)

Community Forum Closing

We'd just like to thank everyone for caring enough to come out tonight. We plan to take your ideas and opinions into consideration as we move forward with our proposal. We'd also like to invite everyone to stay involved. This topic will be discussed at upcoming school board meetings. We'll be sending notices to the newspapers and other media, so stay tuned. Thanks again for your concern and your ideas. Good night.



SECTION V: Mapping It Out



Now that you've educated yourself and gathered information about what your classmates and community say about sexuality education, you can decide to make some suggestions about what your school needs.

You can do this in a couple of different ways. Each way is outlined in this section.

Contents:

- **Making Your Map**
- **Sample School Board Resolution**
- **Sample School Board Proposal**

Making Your Map

When thinking about what type of sexuality education you want in your school, remember to consider three broad subject areas: teachers, timing and topics. Here are some ways you can approach creating a proposal to present to your school board. Each community is different. Try to find the approach that best fits your school and town's needs and concerns.

1. **Resolve.** Write a general resolution that states, in broad terms, what type of education students in your school want. This can become a general statement that you will ask your school board to approve. It's different from a proposal because it doesn't include specific suggestions. Instead, it's a broad statement of a commitment to quality sexuality education. Generally, you'll want to address three general areas of sexuality education: Teachers, timing and topics. A sample resolution is included in this section of the kit, but it's best if you tailor your resolution so that it reflects your community's views on the topic.
2. **Target Topics.** You can use your surveys and the information you learned at the community forum, to make a list of specific subjects that should be taught but are currently overlooked. Your list might be long. To make it more manageable, you might want to decide on the top three subjects that your group wants included in the curriculum.

When doing this, remember to think about which topics have the best chance of gaining community support. For example, if parents really objected to teaching about abortion, you may want to shelve that topic — for now. Try to zero in on subjects that surveyed teens said they need more information on and that parents, teachers and school officials did not object to.

3. **Teachers & Training.** Did students feel that your teachers were comfortable with the subject of sexuality and well trained? What did parents and the community say about this topic? Do you think that teaching methods like peer education or role playing would make good additions to your sexuality education curriculum?
4. **Remember the “when.”** Your proposal could ask for sex ed to be taught earlier. For example, does your school wait until senior year to give students sexuality education? Is that the right time? Or should certain topics be discussed earlier? Be prepared to back up your suggestions with reasons (i.e., by 12th grade, a large percentage of youths have already had sex; some have dropped out of school because they’re pregnant).

Sample School Board Resolution

A simple way to begin getting the school board on your side is by offering a general resolution that supports the idea of good sexuality education in high school. It is a broad statement of policy that can be presented early in the process and can help create a general sense of agreement between the school board, the community, teachers, parents and students. The devil, of course, is in the details, which you’ll work through in your proposal.

Resolution

The [town, city, county, regional] Board of Education recognizes the need for comprehensive sexuality education in our high school.

The board believes that every young person has the right to graduate from high school free of pregnancy and disease. We recognize that pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases among young people are serious problems.

We also believe that students need accurate information and decision-making and communication skills to make choices that will be good for their future.

Therefore, be it resolved that, the [town, city, county, regional] Board of Education supports comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education in our schools.

Sample School Board Proposal

A proposal is more specific than a resolution. It generally asks for certain things. The following proposal is just a sample. Your school may have some similar issues, but your proposal needs to target your school’s specific situation. Be sure to start your proposal by stating what is already good about your school’s program, even if it isn’t much.

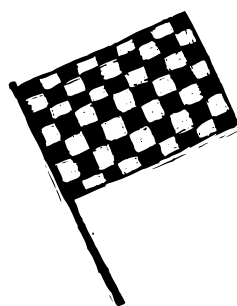
_____ School’s existing sexuality education program has many of the components that are called for in a comprehensive sexuality education program. But, some critical parts are missing. We hope you’ll consider our proposed changes, which are detailed below. We believe these changes could mean that students in our school will make smarter choices, giving all of us a better chance of graduating from high school free of pregnancy and disease.

1. **Group Discussions.** Although some of the lessons in the current program include time for discussion, we would like EVERY lesson to include at least fifteen minutes at the end of class for students to talk about issues and ask questions. This will help us sort out how we feel. It will also make it easier for us to communicate with our future partners and help us learn to understand and respect other people’s opinions.
2. **Contraception.** The current program covers contraception, but we want more information about how each method works and its pros and cons. We also want to see actual methods so everyone — guys and girls — can become more familiar with them. This information will help us make good decisions about the method that would be best for us, when the time comes. Also, if we have seen and handled the various devices in class, we will be more likely to use them if we decide to have sex.
3. **Saying “No”.** Our current curriculum does not include role plays about how to say “no” to sex. We would also like role plays about how to get a partner to use a condom. Many of us will be faced with this kind of situation in the next few years and although we need to know how to say “no”, we need to know what to do if and when we are ready to say “yes”.

SECTION VI:

Reaching the

Final Destination



This section provides information on the political process that you might find yourself caught in. It also explains what advocacy is and provides a checklist of actions you can take to advocate on behalf of yourself and other students in your school.

Contents:

- **The Long and Winding Road: Schools & Politics.** An explanation of the school political system.
- **Greasing the Wheel: Tips for Working with Your School Board**
- **Checkpoints: Advocacy Action List.** A step-by-step plan for advocating for better sex ed.

The Long & Winding Road: Schools & Politics

To be a successful advocate, you have to understand how school boards, superintendents and the public influence each other.

In most states, the school board is charged with overseeing the way your school is run. The school board works for the taxpayers in your town — the people who pay for your schools. These voters have the power to elect school board members — or vote them out of office. So, in general, board members pay attention to what voters say. That's why it is so important to get community support for your cause. (A few towns appoint their school board, but they are still accountable to the public.)

Superintendents work for the school board. They oversee the daily operation of your schools. They are the education experts that the board depends on for guidance on issues. That means their opinions really matter. But, in the end, school boards must approve all policy, personnel and spending decisions.

Politics can get complicated. Board members often have different reasons for supporting — or not supporting — a specific proposal. They are often concerned about cost and public perception. It's your job to convince them that your proposal is good for both students and the community.

Greasing the Wheel: Tips for Working with Your School Board

1. **Who Are They?** You need to know the views of each board member. What do they think are the most pressing issues facing our schools? What parts of the curriculum are they most concerned about? What do they think about sexuality education? You can get at these issues in a number of ways. The best way is to call or write to each board member. Ask them for an individual meeting. Then, discuss their views and ideas and present a few of your own.
2. **Follow Up.** After your meeting, send the board member a packet of information on sexuality education. You can use materials in this guide or other information you find on your own. Tell them again why you think good sexuality education is so important to students and parents.
3. **Attend School Board Meetings.** Start going to meetings so they see you're interested and they get to know who you are. Maybe you can rotate the meeting responsibility among several group members.
4. **Offer to Help.** In some communities, students are represented on the school board. If your board doesn't do this, ask if you could become the student representative. Also, boards might like the idea of a "student consultant" — someone who can give them an inside view on what goes on in high school.
5. **Lobby.** Ask community leaders, parents, religious leaders and others who support your cause to call, write, fax or e-mail school board members. You'd be surprised what a few letters can do.
6. **Position Your Arguments.** When you're talking to board members, remember what concerns them most and make sure your arguments address those issues. So, if a school board member is really worried about taking time away from the three Rs to give students more time in sex ed classes, you could stress how sexuality issues often make it more difficult for students

to learn (i.e., pregnant girls who drop out of school).

7. **Speak Up.** Attend any meeting when board members are scheduled to talk about sexuality issues. Stand up and be heard.
8. **Be Consistent.** You need to get a message and stick to it. Say it over and over again to school board members. Repetition is key.
9. **Support Candidates.** When elections roll around, find the candidates who support good sex ed. Even though you can't vote, you can help them get elected.
10. **Get Your Parents to Vote.** Make sure they weigh in at the ballot box in school elections. Too few people vote in school elections, so it only takes one vote to make a difference. When you have school board members who support sexuality education, your job just got tons easier.

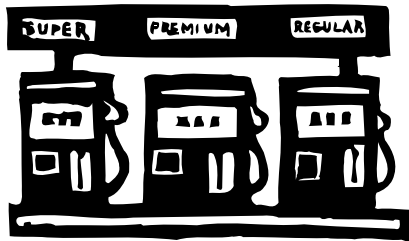


Checkpoints: Advocacy Action List

Here are some action steps you can take. You probably won't be able to do all of these steps in one year. But start with the first and work your way through the list.

- ✓ **Be Informed.** Read the info in this guide and as much other stuff as you can find.
- ✓ **Know Your Community.** Analyze the information you received from the student survey, the community forum and the parent survey so you have an accurate picture of what students, parents and teachers think about sexuality education. If possible, make charts or graphs that show the results of your research in a way that would persuade people you have community support.
- ✓ **Show Support.** Prepare a list of community organizations that support your cause.
- ✓ **Know Your Current Sexuality Education Program.**
- ✓ **Prepare a Proposal or Resolution.**
- ✓ **Get on the Agenda.** You're going to need to lobby several boards, including the school board sub-committee that oversees sexuality education (many communities have one), the parent-teachers association, the school board. You'll need to call the board chairman or president and ask to be placed on the agenda of its next meeting. At each meeting, you should present your research, petitions and recommendations. Bring along a few students to tell board members why sexuality education is crucial for teens. Ask supportive parents, community leaders and other adults to also attend the meetings to voice support. Present your resolution on sexuality education. Ask the boards to pass the resolution and ask for their support and their advice in making real changes in your school.
- ✓ **Lobby.** This means talking to board members separately. You can call them and ask for their support. It's also crucial to attend school board meetings so they get to know you and realize that you are truly interested in what's happening in your school district. This will help you gain their respect. It will help you find out where each member stands and whether you can count on their vote. (More on this under "Tips for Working with Your School Board.")
- ✓ **Alert the Media.** At some point during this process, you should let newspapers, radio and TV stations know what's going on. (More about this in the "Tips for Working with the Media" section.)
- ✓ **Be Patient and Persistent.** Change takes a lot of time (sometimes years) and hard work. Don't give up. If they put you off at one meeting, just show up at the next one. They can't ignore you forever when you show them you aren't going away.
- ✓ **Be Happy with Small Victories.** Change happens one small step at a time. If you've gotten a resolution passed, you've done something.
- ✓ **Pass It On.** When you graduate, give this guide to another group of students who are brave enough to ride the road to better sex ed. They can start a new project, or make sure that the policies you helped pass actually get implemented.

SECTION VII: Priming the Publicity Pump



The media can be a great help in spreading awareness of your advocacy efforts. This section tells you how to work with the media to get your message out.

Contents:

- **Tips for Working with the Media**
- **Sample Radio Public Service Announcement**
- **Sample Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed Piece**
- **Navigating the Net**

Tips for Working with the Media

The media can help get your message out to the public. Politicians and school board members also pay close attention to media coverage of issues. Here are some ways to get editors and reporters interested in your story.

1. **Don't Be Intimidated.** Reporters need stories. And stories about young people working for a particular cause always make good copy. Plus, you have sex in your story. And you know what that means. It sells.

2. **Know Your Media.** Most media — newspaper, radio and television stations — are geographically oriented. That means they are only interested in a particular area. Some are strictly local, so they're interested in a town or group of towns. Others are statewide, regional, national and international.

You'll need to make a list of media that are interested in your town. Your local newspapers are your easiest sell. Read the papers in your area and see which reporter covers your school board. Also, check the yellow pages for a listing of media. Look under "newspaper," "radio," and "television." Your local library should also have books that list media. Ask the reference librarian for help in finding other media that might be interested in your story. Also, organizations that support your cause may already have a media list they would share with you. From all these sources, you can cull a good list of media to contact with your story.

3. **Write a Press Release.** You can use the sample press release in this kit as a guide, but here are some general guidelines. Put your name, address and phone number in the top right-hand corner. Write a headline. A press release should be written in simple, straight-forward sentences that give the facts about

your cause. (Remember, the who, what, where, when and why.)

Also include information about your group and statistics that support your argument that schools need better sexuality education. Use information in this guide about the teen pregnancy rate, HIV/AIDS among teens and STDs among teens.

Tie the release to an event. It's best if you can send a release in advance of a school board or community meeting. Reporters will often do an advance story on an interesting issue and then cover the meeting.

The release should be typed, double-spaced and, in general, should be no more than two pages long.

4. **Get the Word Out.** Mail the release to reporters on your list. Send the release at least two weeks before the meeting.
5. **Call.** A couple of days after you've sent your release, call reporters and editors. Ask them whether they want to meet with you, other students, parents, teachers, school officials or other adults who are supporting your cause. Offer to help arrange the interview. If they aren't interested in an advance, ask whether they will cover the meeting. Let them know that students and others will be there.
6. **Give Them the Facts...** plus a few personal stories. People make a good story even better so try to have teens who are willing to talk about their personal experiences and how they would benefit from better sexuality education. Also, be ready to explain why students need better sex ed and have information available on the current curriculum.
7. **Get on TV.** Often television and radio stations have talk shows that would be interested in having a group of socially minded youths appear. Watch television and listen to the radio. Cable shows are especially open to this kind of story. When you've found some shows that are interested in health and political issues, call the show's producer or write a letter. Tell them what you're doing and ask whether they might be interested in doing a show on your issue.
8. **Keep in Touch.** Drop a note or phone a reporter after they've done a story to say, "Thanks."

9. **Calendars.** When publicizing your meeting, remember to send a short release to the "Community Calendars" sections of your local newspapers. Just include the date, time, place and subject of the meeting. The newspapers will include it with a listing of other meetings.

Sample Radio PSA

Most radio stations give free air time to community groups that want to advertise an event. Send out a Public Service Announcement (PSA) in advance of the school board or community meeting.

Here's a sample PSA:

Community Forum to Discuss Sex Ed in the Schools

Every young person has a right to graduate from high school free of pregnancy and disease. (Group name) is working to make that happen. This group of high school students is sponsoring a community forum on sexuality education in (school name). The meeting will be held at (time) on (date) at (place). The public is encouraged to attend to express their opinion about what schools should teach students about sex, relationships, HIV/AIDS and other important issues.

Sample Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed Piece

The letter on the opposite page (or your own version) should be sent to your school newspaper and newspapers that cover your area. When sending the letter to newspapers outside your school, address it to: Editorial Page Editor or better yet, find out who that is and address it directly to that person. You can follow up a few days after you sent it to see if they're interested in using it. A quick call is OK.

Young People Need Sexuality Information to Make Smart Choices

Young people today face tough choices, some that can cost us our lives. What's really scary is that so many of us are making the wrong choices. Nationally, about 880,000 teenagers become pregnant each year, according to recent statistics. Forty-three percent of young women become pregnant at least once before turning 20.

HIV/AIDS cases are growing fastest among teens and young adults, many of whom contracted the HIV virus while teenagers. One out of every four — or 3 million — sexually active teens gets infected with a sexually transmitted disease each year.

We are the first generation to grow up in the shadow of AIDS. We are exposed to more sex on television and in the media than any generation before us. We're bombarded with contradictory messages: "Sex is love. Sex is death." We know the truth lies somewhere in between.

But we need adults to stop beating around the bush. We need them to level with us about the complexities of sex and relationships. We need them to stop being afraid to talk about our sexuality. We need them to acknowledge that sexuality is a natural part of our development. We need them to teach us how to manage our sexuality, responsibly, and in a way that is best for us.

That's why a group of students at (High School name) are lobbying the school board for a better sexuality education curriculum. Our proposed program would provide age-appropriate information to high school students. The idea is to help young people make smart decisions when they are faced with inevitable choices that could change their lives.

Some people argue that educating young people about sex will make us go out and do it. That's crazy. We are not stupid — just misinformed. Besides, the pressure to have sex already exists. In our school hallways. In the shows we watch. In the locker room. On the football field. And that pressure is working. On average, girls begin having sex at about 17. For boys, it's 16.

We're asking the community, parents, teachers and the school board to support us in our quest for better information and better skills. Don't let us roam in ignorance. Give us the information and skills we need so we can make smart choices. We want to graduate from high school free of pregnancy and disease. We deserve that chance.

Navigating the Net

If you have a group member who is a computer whiz, you may be able to create a Web site that champions your cause. Ask your school principal whether your district will host your site. If not, many Internet service providers allow users to create their own site.

If you do create a Web site, remember to include information about your organization, your cause and statistics that support the need for better sexuality education. You can also include the names of people and organizations that support your cause. Be sure to give people a way to get involved. The more partners you have, the better.

BUT BE CAREFUL!!! There are people who use the Internet to lure young people into illegal pornographic sex “chat rooms” and other dangerous activities. Do not give out personal e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, home addresses or credit card numbers. And never agree to meet someone in person whom you’ve met on the Internet. If someone sends you messages or solicits you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable and that seems wrong, follow your gut. Immediately cut off any connection with that person. Then, tell someone!! A trusted adult is best. You, or your parents, should also notify your Internet provider about this person. He (or she) could be trying to hurt others.

SURF SAFELY!

Here are some Web sites to check out for more information:

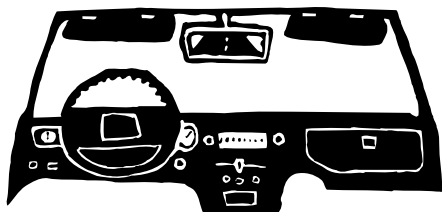
- 1. The Alan Guttmacher Institute — agi-usa.org**
Provides access to its many publications dealing with sexuality and a way to search back issues of its periodical, *Family Planning Perspectives*, for articles on health and sexuality.
- 2. American Social Health Association — ashastd.org**
Offers news releases, brochures, legislative advocacy information, educational materials, surveys, research findings and answers to frequently asked questions about sexually transmitted diseases.
- 3. Planned Parenthood — teenwire.org; ppfa.org**
Offers a variety of information about teen pregnancy, sexual health, birth control and abortion, as well as resources for parents and other adults. Also offers links to other informative sites.
- 4. SIECUS — siecus.org**
Posts texts of many of its publications that offer many articles about sexuality.
- 5. Advocates for Youth — advocatesforyouth.org**
Offers tons of information about teen advocacy and health.
- 6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — cdc.gov**
The place to go for the latest stats on various health issues. Has a search feature to help you find what you’re looking for.
- 7. National School Boards Association — nsba.org**
The latest information on school board politics and other items of interest to advocates. Also has a special section devoted to school health programs (a great place to find out what others are doing). You can also ask questions of people who are experts when it comes to working with school boards.
- 8. National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy — teenpregnancy.org**
A great place for updates and research. Also has tons of links to other great sites.

To learn more about sexuality — and the questions that are on kids’ minds — check out these sites:

- 1. Go Ask Alice! — goaskalice.columbia.edu**
A program of Columbia University’s Health Education Program, “Go Ask Alice!” is an interactive question-and-answer service. Lots of great questions and honest answers on everything from sexuality and relationships to alcohol and drug abuse.
- 2. SEX, ETC. — sxetc.org**
Offers articles written by teens for teens that appeared in *SEX, ETC.*, a national newsletter on teen health and sexuality. Also gives teens a place to ask questions, which are answered by health experts. Live chats, message boards, and links to other teen sites.
- 3. Dr. Drew — drdrew.com**
Dr. Ruth Westheimer — drruth.com
Young people can find information about birth control, pregnancy, STDs and other sexual health issues. “Ask Dr. Drew” and “Ask Dr. Ruth” sections include a list of teens’ questions and answers. Both Web sites also have feature stories and message boards.
- 4. Teen Advice Online — teenadvice.org**
Offers articles by teen counselors on topics ranging from study habits to rape. The site invites contributions from teen visitors.
- 5. Youth Resource — youthresource.com**
For gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning teens.

These are just a handful of useful sites out there. As you start surfing, you’re sure to discover more. Just remember to surf safely!

Section VIII: Driving Home Your Points



Now that you've learned about sexuality education, talked to parents and members of your community, contacted the media and begun talking to school board members, you're ready to start answering their arguments.

This section of the kit gives you the tools you need to respond to concerns about and objections to your proposals.

Contents:

- **They Say... You Say: Answers to Frequently Argued Myths**
- **Tips for Public Speaking**
- **Sample Position Paper**

They Say...You Say: Answers to Frequently Argued Myths

MYTH: Talking about contraception with young people sends the message that you think it's OK if they have sex.

TRUTH: Giving young people information sends the message that you care about them and want them to make educated and responsible decisions. Not

giving them information leaves them without the tools to make good decisions and sends the message that you don't care what they do.

MYTH: Sex before marriage is psychologically harmful.

TRUTH: There is no evidence to support this. Sexual relationships that are coercive, exploitive, unprotected and without respect and trust are psychologically harmful, and they happen between people who are married and unmarried. Comprehensive sexuality education gives young people the skills to stay out of these kinds of harmful relationships and/or helps them recognize and end unhealthy relationships in which they are involved.

MYTH: Sexuality education that starts in high school is adequate — younger children do not need information about sexuality.

TRUTH: Children are interested and curious about issues related to sexuality starting at very young ages. Refusing to give them good, factual answers to their questions and denying them opportunities to learn about this subject sends a message that sex is bad and

that they are somehow bad to want to know about it. We provide foundations for all other subjects — math, science, history — starting in kindergarten. For sexuality education to be beneficial, it needs to begin with age-appropriate lessons for young children and build on itself over time.

MYTH: Comprehensive sexuality education doesn't help young people make good decisions.

TRUTH: It hasn't been given a chance to work. Very few schools provide sex ed during all four years of high school or provide true comprehensive sexuality education. Many schools provide abstinence-only education that focuses on biology and is usually too little, too late.

MYTH: Schools spend so much time teaching about health that kids aren't learning how to read and write.

TRUTH: Good sexuality education programs give students a chance to develop reading and writing skills on a subject that is very interesting to them. Also, students who are healthy and making smart choices tend to do better in school. They're more focused.

MYTH: Teaching young people about contraception will encourage them to have sex.

TRUTH: It's just the opposite. Studies have shown that comprehensive sexuality education helps young people postpone getting sexually involved. Also, many people agree that it's best to stress abstinence as the most effective way to prevent unplanned pregnancy and STDs. But, the reality is that most people will have sex sometime during their young adulthood, many during their teenage years. Young people need to know what to do to prevent pregnancy and STDs before they become sexually active. This is not a mixed message. It's a realistic one.

MYTH: Most parents are against comprehensive sexuality education being taught in schools.

TRUTH: Most parents support sexuality education in the schools and are relieved to know that their children are getting information they need to deal with complex sexuality issues. Most adults did not receive sexuality education and feel uncomfortable discussing these issues with children.

School programs can help improve communication between young people and their parents.

MYTH: Making condoms available in school encourages young people to have sex.

TRUTH: Actually, giving out contraceptives in school encourages youths who are having unprotected sex to use condoms and other forms of contraception to protect themselves from pregnancy and STDs. It also encourages young people who have decided to become sexually active to use protection from the very first experience onward.

MYTH: Condoms don't work and promoting condom use gives people a false sense of security.

TRUTH: Condoms don't usually fail, condom users do. When condoms are used consistently and correctly they are more than 95 percent effective at preventing pregnancy and STD transmission. That's far better than using nothing at all. Most people don't know how to use condoms correctly because they never received good instruction on their use, and/or they do not use them every time they have sex. People who participate in sex education that includes demonstration of condom use and provides people with practice negotiating for condom use have a much greater chance of using condoms correctly every time they have sex.

MYTH: Talking about homosexuality will encourage young people to become homosexuals.

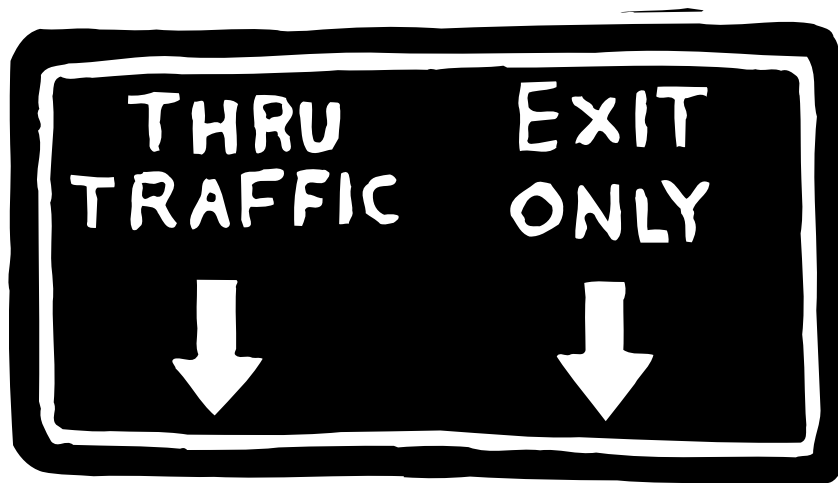
TRUTH: Giving people information about this subject will help them learn about themselves and understand others. Giving young people a chance to discuss sexual orientation and other aspects of sex is a good way for them to figure out who they are. And that helps them make better choices. It does not promote any particular sexual orientation or lifestyle.

MYTH: AIDS is God's punishment to gays.

TRUTH: AIDS is an illness. It is caused by a virus called HIV, which is passed from one person to another when they participate in certain behaviors. Some of these behaviors are sexual, others are not. People of all ages, races and sexual orientations have been infected with this virus. It does not discriminate.

Tips for Public Speaking

1. **Put It on Paper.** Write down what you plan to say. Make sure you include all the important points you want to make. You can do this either by writing out your speech or just listing key points — whichever makes you most comfortable.
2. **Read Aloud.** Read what you have written aloud, several times. This helps you determine if anything sounds awkward. It will also tell you how much time you need to make your case. Learn how to say difficult words or names in advance and practice pronouncing them often.
3. **Watch Yourself.** Read your speech aloud while standing in front of a mirror. Try to look up from your paper several times. Train yourself to look up often so that you can make eye contact with your audience. Take pauses when you need to and breathe deeply.
4. **Speak Clearly and Slowly.** Never rush through what you want to say. If you must make your speech shorter, then edit carefully and make every word count.
5. **Repeat Yourself.** Make your most important points, in different ways, at least two times so that your audience really hears those points.
6. **Make Memories.** Make the last things you say positive and memorable. Leave them feeling ready to take action and with you 100 percent.
7. **Visualize It.** Use charts, graphs or other illustrations to back up your points.



Sample Position Paper

(Instructions: Use for speaking to the school board or other groups. Can also send as a letter to school board members.)

We deserve the chance to graduate from high school disease and pregnancy free. We're entitled to have good relationships with others, to find jobs that we like and that can support us and our future families.

Comprehensive sexuality education can help us move on to futures that are full of hope and promise.

It's so much more than sex ed. It is positive education that promotes healthy lifestyles and smart choices. It is not just about biological function or disease. Although it includes the basic anatomy and reproductive facts, comprehensive sexuality education covers a broad range of topics, including gender roles, relationships, dating and communication, self-esteem and body image, being a good friend, decision-making, tolerance and respect for differences. These classes also teach basic facts about contraception, safer sex, pregnancy, parenting, and sexually transmitted diseases. They also teach us decision-making, communication, negotiation and refusal skills.

This approach not only gives young people the skills we need to develop into sexually healthy adults, it also makes us into better friends, partners, lovers, parents and professionals.

Solid sex ed teaches us to distinguish fact and fiction in the media - especially with regard to sex, which is so prevalent in today's media. It helps us question the "follow-the-crowd" mentality that leads so many teens to dangerous decisions. It may even begin to help us challenge the widely held belief that "it can't happen to me." Additionally, comprehensive sexuality education can help teens develop lifelong healthy habits and the ability to take responsibility for our own actions.

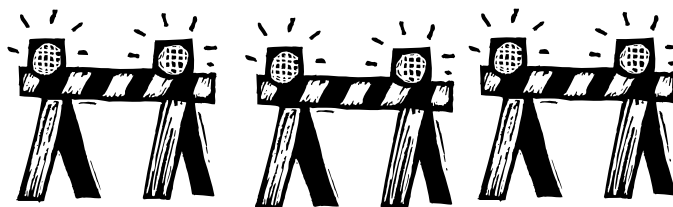
Giving young people information about contraception and safer sex does not encourage us to have sex. No study has shown that to be true. More importantly, we can testify to the fact that many older teens are choosing to have sex, whether or not they receive information and education.

At its best, sexuality education can help us understand the consequences of our actions, without using scare tactics or threats. It can build and enhance our self-esteem so we take care of ourselves, so that we can graduate from high school healthy and free of disease and pregnancy.

Support us in those goals. Give us solid sexuality education.

SECTION IX:

Wrestling with Roadblocks



We'd be remiss if we didn't discuss the fact that some people are strongly opposed to giving young people any type of sexuality education, unless it teaches only that sex before marriage is wrong.

In fact, many communities allow only abstinence-only and abstinence-until-marriage sex education programs in their schools. And their numbers could grow. The federal government, in its recent welfare reform bill, included millions of dollars in grants to states. Those grants can be used only for programs that teach students they should wait until they are married to have sex and forbids any discussion of safer sex.

Sex is Bad

School districts that take this money cannot allow their teachers to talk about contraception and related issues with their students. Instead, these abstinence-only programs must teach that sexual activity outside of marriage can cause harm — physically, emotionally and psychologically. These programs rarely allow students opportunities to discuss issues with each other, to practice decision-making skills or to develop critical thinking skills.

Some individuals and groups that support abstinence-until-marriage programs often represent certain religious groups that also tend to oppose abortion. You may hear the terms “right-wing,” or “far right,” as you wind your way through the political process; these terms refer to groups that politically support certain programs such as abstinence-only, or abstinence-until-marriage programs.

Of course, everyone is entitled to their opinions. But, you may find that a strong (though not necessarily large) contingent of people who hold these views can impose those beliefs on an entire community. They can stop a quality sexuality education program in its tracks. And it can be very difficult for young people to fight it.

More Adult Support

If this happens in your community, you really need, more than ever, strong support from adults in your community. Chances are you'll have to take your cause to the state Legislature. The goal would then become to convince state lawmakers to pass a law that mandates comprehensive sexuality education. Those laws, hopefully, make it more difficult for one group on a local

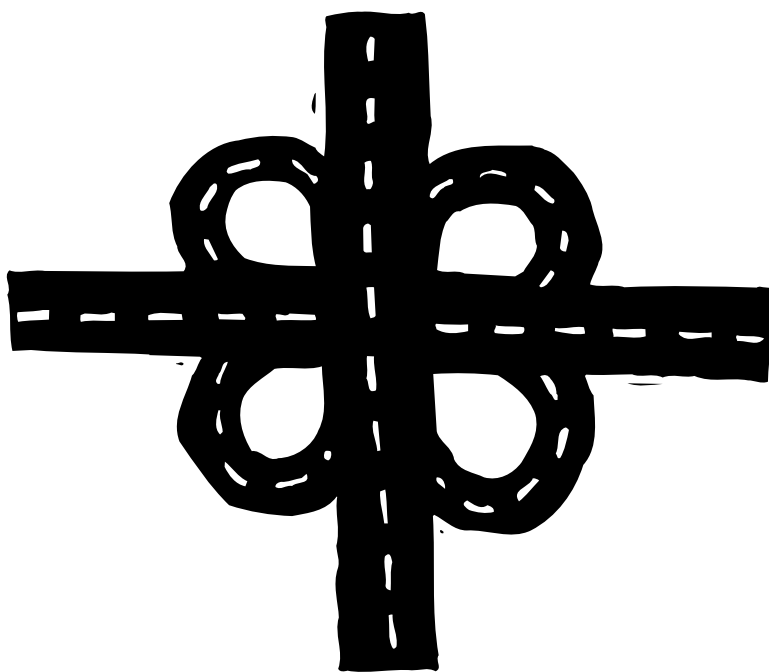
level to oppose a quality program.

State politics is different from local politics. And while some of the strategies offered in this guide would be helpful on the state level, it really is a different arena that requires a different approach.

If you find yourself blocked on the local level, your best detour course is to seek out groups or a coalition that support comprehensive sexuality education. They might already be working with state lawmakers to change your state's laws. Ask the community contacts you've made throughout the kit whether they know of such a group. If they don't know, check with your state departments of health, education and/or human services.

Statewide Focus

If such a group does not exist, then maybe, through your coalition building, you have brought together enough like-minded adults to start one. If so, you can support the adults in their advocacy, continue to organize teenagers to lobby your state lawmakers and state board of education and continue to act as youth spokespeople so that your views are heard in the continuing debate over sexuality education.



SECTION X:

Tooting Your Horn



Listed below, as a review, are some of the personal and group strategies you and your allies will need to use in the process of trying to bring about changes in your school's sex ed program:

- Be Brave and Strong, and Respectful
- Have the Courage to Take Risks
- Know What You Want
- Look for Opportunities
- Use Experts
- Work Together
- Know the Facts
- Study the Research
- Use the Internet
- Use the Media
- Rehearse Your Arguments
- Pressure Key Leaders in Your Community
- Build a Coalition
- Don't Be Afraid to Ask Adults for Help
- Be Prepared to Take Incremental Steps
- Realize the Power of Compromise

*Good luck as you prepare to use **The Roadmap**. Never forget that you are working to help young people like yourself get the information and skills they need to graduate from high school without having a pregnancy, or becoming a teen parent. For any and all efforts you and your friends make, your peers will be grateful.*

Evaluation Comments

Please let us know how you used *The Roadmap*, what you liked about it and what we can do in the future to make it better and easier to use. (If additional space is needed, use the back of comment sheet.) Many thanks. Please return to: Network for Family Life Education, Center for Applied Psychology, Rutgers University, 41 Gordon Road, Suite A, Piscataway, NJ 08854.



Network for Family Life Education
Center for Applied Psychology
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
41 Gordon Road, Suite A
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8067
Ph: 732/445-7929; fax: 732/445-7970
E-mail: netfle@rci.rutgers.edu