

Fundamentals of Answering Values Questions Core Concept

All people deserve to receive information related to sexual values that is accurate, unbiased, non-judgmental, and encourages them to think critically and explore their own values.

RATIONALE

How do we teach, and why do we teach that way?

- Educators have a social obligation to teach **universal values; values that are deeply held by most of society**. Responsibility, justice, equality, consensual conduct, and non-violence are all universal values reinforced by sex education.
- Talking about non-universal values must be done in a way that shows respect for the diversity of opinions within the community and supports a family's right to share their values with their children.
- Educators should not share personal beliefs about non-universal values in an education setting.

TALKING POINTS

What do we say?

- The FLASH Values Question Protocol gives educators a framework to conscientiously answer questions about values and respect the diverse views that may be held in a group and larger community.¹
- Values-based questions can be answered by facilitating respectful discussion, providing factual information, and exploring the range of beliefs people may have about a topic.
- Sex education complements the role of families as primary sex educators by helping students explore and identify their own beliefs and the beliefs of the important adults in their lives.

KNOW THE FACTS

FACT: Sex education is not values-free, nor should it be. Effective sex education reinforces **universal values** such as respect, empathy, and acceptance while helping students to build critical thinking skills to identify and explore their own beliefs.

FACT: Values questions can and should be answered with respect.

FACT: Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, etc. are part of an individual's identity, and questions about identities should not be treated as values based. Instead, they should be treated as facts, emphasizing the universal value that all people deserve to be treated with respect.

RESPONDING TO VALUES QUESTIONS

Sample Values Question: "How old should a person be when they start having sex?"

Affirm the asker, validate the question.

I'm really glad you asked this. A lot of people have questions about this.

Identify the questions as a values question.

The answer to this question really depends on a person's individual beliefs or values.

Answer the factual part of the question.

While there are a lot of ideas about when it's okay for a person to start having sex, there is one fact that applies to everyone, and that is that consent must always be asked for and given before any sexual activity happens. Even if a person is ready to have sex, if their partner or partners are not, then sexual contact must wait. In our society, it is a universal value that it is not appropriate for young

children to have sex. There are laws that say a person needs to be able to consent to sex. In this state, the age of consent is ___.

Explore the range of beliefs held.

Some people believe that a person should be a certain age before they have sex; others believe people should be in a committed relationship. Some people believe marriage should happen before sex, and others believe sex is okay at any time.

Refer the student to family or another trusted adult in their life.

Only you can decide what you are comfortable doing and when. And with whom! Checking in with people you trust and whose values you respect can help you figure out what is right for you!

1 FLASH Curriculum. *King County Public Health*, 2019, www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash.