

**Fundamentals of Sex Education Core Concept**

People learn about sexuality from peers, family, media, and many other places. Formal sex ed in a classroom or community-based setting meets an important need. It provides accurate information on a variety of topics, and addresses the biological, cultural, psychological and ethical dimensions of sexuality.

**RATIONALE**

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

- **Everyone deserves sex education and young people have the right to information and skills that are essential to protect their health.**
- Young people should receive age-appropriate, medically accurate information and answers to their questions about sex and relationships, without being shamed or judged.
- Young people deserve access to information about supportive relationships and good communication.
- Participants must see themselves reflected in all the topics covered in the sex education they receive, to meaningfully engage and understand how to apply it to their lives.

**KNOW THE FACTS**

**SEX EDUCATION...**

- Helps people make informed decisions and become grounded in their values.
- Helps people understand and feel agency over their values and bodies.
- Supports critical thinking.

**HIGH QUALITY SEX ED IS...**

**COMPREHENSIVE**

Covers a broad array of sexuality topics, providing complete information, and not just what aligns with the educator’s or organization’s values.<sup>1</sup>

**MEDICALLY ACCURATE**

Based in scientific evidence and agreed upon by mainstream professional organizations as true, objective, and complete.<sup>2</sup>

**AGE & DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE**

Aligns the content and delivery method with where the participants are developmentally. This ensures it is relevant to their lives, understandable, and that participants have the capacity to engage with the material.<sup>3</sup>

**TRAUMA-INFORMED**

Recognizes the impact of trauma on students’ ability to learn, and the potential for topics covered to cause harm. Responds by creating a safe environment, building trust through transparency, and seeking to empower participants.<sup>4</sup>

**LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE**

Incorporates all gender and sexual identities into each lesson so students see themselves and their needs reflected in the content.

**SEX-POSITIVE**

Conveys sexuality as a natural and healthy part of life; focusing on the potential positives that can come from sexuality, not just the harms. Sex-positivity recognizes and affirms people’s right to make decisions about their sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

**STRENGTHS-BASED & CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE**

Recognizes and references participants’ strengths, norms, and lived experiences by drawing on what motivates the youth, what matters to them, and how the topics are relevant to their lives.<sup>6</sup> Content should reflect experiences and examples relevant to racial background, ability, culture, etc.

**USES LEARNING THEORIES AND SOUND TEACHING PRACTICES**

Considers how participants absorb, process, retain and apply knowledge to create a variety of effective sex education teaching strategies.<sup>7</sup>

**COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX ED**

**Doesn't sex education encourage young people to have sex?**

This is a common question. Studies show that teens who receive comprehensive sex ed are more likely to delay the first time they have sex, and when they decide to become sexually active are more likely to use condoms and/or birth control. I'd be happy to share the research articles with you!<sup>8,9</sup>

**Why should sex ed happen anywhere other than at home with parents and guardians?**

Sex ed does happen in the home – sex education in school or community settings complements the role of parents and guardians in providing accurate information and tools for people to explore their individual values and those of their families and communities. In fact, polls show that 89% of voters believe it is important to have sex ed in middle school, and 98% believe it is important to have sex ed in high school. Does that answer your question?<sup>10,11</sup>

1 "Definition of Comprehensive Sex Education." *Futureofsexed.org*, [www.futureofsexed.org/definition.html](http://www.futureofsexed.org/definition.html).

2 Santelli, JS. "Medical accuracy in sex education: Ideology and the scientific process." *American Journal of Public Health*, 2008; 98 (10): 1786-1792.

3 Future of Sex Education Initiative. (2012). *National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12* [a special publication of the Journal of School Health], <http://www.futureofsexeducation.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf>

4 "Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration." *SAMHSA*, [www.samhsa.gov/](http://www.samhsa.gov/).

5 "Welcome to ReCAPP!" *ReCAPP, ETR*, [recapp.etr.org/recapp/](http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/).

6 Ladson-Billings, G. *The Dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing Co, 2004.

7 "National Teacher Preparation Standards for Sexuality Education." *Futureofsexed.org*, [www.futureofsexed.org/teacherstandards.html](http://www.futureofsexed.org/teacherstandards.html).

8 Kemper, Martha. "New research again confirms that comprehensive sex ed delays first sex and keeps teens safe." *Rewire News*, 2012, <https://rewire.news/article/2012/03/10/sex-education-leads-to-better-sexual-decisions-and-healthier-relationships/>.

9 Lindberg, Duberstein & Maddow-Zimmet, Isaac. "Consequences of sex education on teen and young adult sexual behaviors and outcomes." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2012; 51 (4): 332-338, [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/article\\_files/j.jadohealth.2011.12.028.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/article_files/j.jadohealth.2011.12.028.pdf).

10 "Parents Sex Ed Center." *www.Futureofsexed.org*, Advocates for Youth, [www.futureofsexed.org/parents-sex-ed-center-home](http://www.futureofsexed.org/parents-sex-ed-center-home).

11 "On Our Side: Public Support for Sex Education." *Siecus*, 2018, <https://siecus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/On-Our-Side-Public-Support-for-Sex-Education-2018-Final.pdf>.