

Fundamentals of Parent Partnership in Sex Education

Comprehensive sex education (CSE) provides a foundation for young people to learn about their health, bodies and relationships. While 90% of parents believe CSE should be taught in schools (Resources 1, 15), educators should be prepared to address questions and concerns from parents, caregivers, and school administrators. The tools and resources in this fact sheet support educators in engaging parents, caregivers, and administrators as partners in sex education, with a list of supporting documents on Page 3.

RATIONALE

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

- Comprehensive sex education (CSE) provides medically accurate information about all aspects of human sexuality including anatomy, sexual health, relationships, consent, and gender. (Resources 1, 2, 5, 6, 14, 17)
- The National Sex Education Standards are aligned to age-appropriate topics and can be used to develop or assess sex education lessons. (Resource 14)
- Comprehensive sex education teaches skills that reduce child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. (Resources 2, 13, 17, 19)
- Comprehensive sex education (CSE) supports students' social emotional learning, including empathy, respect for differences, and relationship skills. (Resources 2, 6, 12, 13, 17, 19)
- Educators teach universal values like health and safety but should not share their personal values. (Resources 8, 9, 17)
- Educators help students understand how their values inform personal decision making and encourage them to discuss these values with a trusted adult. (Resources 8, 9, 14)
- While educators provide accurate information, parents/caregivers are their young people's primary sex educators and have the greatest influence in shaping their values and decisions. (Resources 9, 17)

KNOW THE FACTS

FACT: The onset of puberty is occurring earlier for young people, underscoring the need for students to receive information about puberty in a timely manner. (Resource 16)

FACT: Over the past decade, fewer adolescents have been engaging in sexual activity. However, trends also indicate that sexually active teens are less likely to use condoms than teens 10 years ago, demonstrating the continued importance of comprehensive sex education (CSE). (Resource 21)

FACT: Separating sex education classes into gender groups is not best practice. Learning together in mixed gender classes encourages empathy and reduces stigma and bullying. (Resources 1, 13, 16)

FACT: Comprehensive sex education (CSE) improves health outcomes, such as: (Resources 5, 7, 12, 13, 17, 19):

- Later initiation of sexual activity
- Reduced rates of unintended pregnancy and STIs
- Increased use of protection methods (condoms or oral barriers)

FACT: Laws specifying sex education requirements for schools vary by state. (Resources 6, 7, 17)

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS/CAREGIVERS & SAMPLE ANSWERS

- Q. My child is not having sex. Why do they need to learn this? OR**
- Q. Why are you teaching my kid how to have sex? OR**
- Q. Doesn't teaching kids about sex only give them permission to start having sex?**
- This is a good question and one a lot of parents and caregivers have. Sex education is not about teaching people how to have sex or about sexual technique. Teaching young people about sexual health is an important part of health education. Studies show that when young people are provided with accurate information, they are more likely to delay sexual activity. The goal of the lesson is to give students age-appropriate information to make informed decisions to protect their health. (Resources 13, 14, 17, 19)
 - Because young people are increasingly online and interacting through social media, they may be exposed to sexual content at younger ages. Comprehensive sex education (CSE) corrects misinformation, promotes safety and respect, and builds media literacy skills. (Resources 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 17, 19)
- Q. Are you going to talk to my child about gay sex?**
- I'm glad you asked this question. Inclusive sex education includes information about anatomy and how to be safe. When we talk about sex, we refer to three types: oral, anal and vaginal sex. Using medically accurate terminology allows all young people to have information to make informed decisions, regardless of their anatomy, sexual orientation, or gender. (Resources 1, 5, 6, 13, 14, 17, 21)
- Q. I believe that there are only two genders. Will you teach that?**
- Thank you for asking about this. We talk about it in a way that is inclusive and representative of all people. Gender exists on a spectrum and is a person's internal sense of self. Learning about gender helps people understand their own identities, that differences are normal, and to be accepting of differences in others. (Resources 1, 2, 3, 14, 17, 21)
- Q. I believe that these conversations belong at home with family. Why are you teaching this in school?**
- I'm glad you asked this question; it's an important one. As a parent/caregiver, you are the primary sex educator for your young person. People have different beliefs and values when it comes to sexuality, and educators do not share their personal values on this topic with students. Instead, educators ensure that young people have access to factual and age-appropriate information about their bodies, health, and safety. We encourage students to talk with parents/caregivers about sexuality/sex education because it is an opportunity for families to share their values and beliefs and to explore what is important to them. (Resources 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 19)
 - Schools and parents/caregivers are partners in supporting young people to be safe and make healthy decisions. Educators encourage young people to talk to trusted adults about these topics. In fact, young people who have access to comprehensive sex education (CSE) and/or talk with trusted adults are more likely to delay sexual activity and more likely to use condoms if they do have sex. (Resources 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 20)

RESOURCE LIST

1. [Advancing Inclusivity: The Impact of Gender Segregation in Sex Education](#), Sex Ed for Social Change (SIECUS).
2. [All Young People Need and Deserve Sex Education](#), Healthy Teen Network, 2025.
3. [Challenging Gender Identity: Biologists Say Gender Expands Across A Spectrum, Rather Than Simply Boy And Girl](#), UCLA Institute for Society & Genetics, 2015.
4. [Childhood Digital Exposure to Sexual Content: Through the Lens of Developmental Psychopathology](#). Sravanti et al, Journal of Psychosexual Health, 2025.
5. [Comprehensive sexuality education](#), World Health Organization, 2023.
6. [Comprehensive Sexuality Education](#), American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
7. [Detailed Insights on U.S. Sex Education Policies](#), SIECUS, 2023.
8. [Fundamentals of Answering Questions in Sex Ed](#), Spark*ED, 2026.
9. [Fundamentals of Answering Values Questions](#), Spark*ED, 2025.
10. [How Can I Teach My Values?](#) (for parents/caregivers) AMAZE, 2019
11. [Increased Parent Support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education Over 15 Years](#). Eisenberg, et al., Journal of Adolescent Health, 2022.
12. [International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach. Revised edition](#). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2018.
13. [Key Findings from “Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Primary Prevention Strategy for Sexual Violence Perpetration”](#), National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), 2021.
14. [National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12, Second Edition](#), Future of Sex Ed (FoSE), 2020.
15. [On Our Side: Public Support for Sex Education](#), SIECUS, 2018.
16. [Puberty and Precocious Puberty](#), US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health.
17. [Promising Approaches to Comprehensive Sex Education: Evidence from Three Decades of Research](#), Goldfarb et al, Journal of Adolescent Health, 2026.
18. [State Laws and Policies Sex Education and HIV Education](#), Guttmacher, 2025.
19. [Sexual Communication Between Early Adolescents and Their Dating Partners, Parents, and Best Friends](#), National Library of Health, National Institutes Health, 2015
20. [Talking with Your Teens about Sex](#), CDC, 2024.
21. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2013 – 2023](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2024.