

Condom distribution in high schools



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Condom Availability in High Schools: When we discuss the history of sexual education, we are actually only tracing historically back to about 1910 - 1920. Before this time period, there was no such thing as sexual education in schools. Before 1920, the only real literature which loomed in library shelves was not only few and far between but was more of a preachy approach to the 'woe' of multiple partners and the possibly spread of STDs. It was not until about 1915 that Margret Sanger surfaced as the founder, so to speak, of sexual education and abortion aka planned parenthood. Later in the early 1930's, the national League of Sex Education was generated. It was however, a woman by the name of Ella Flagg Young, who pioneered the notion of sexual education on a public school level by converging the appeal of Science with the taboo subject of sex in general. Young capably introduced her ideals in the "Chicago Experiment" of 1913, "During the Progressive Era, Dr. Ella Flagg Young instituted the first sexual education program in U. S. public schools. She garnered support for her "Chicago Experiment" by integrating scientific appeals about sexual education into popular discourses on modern research methods"(Jensen, 2007, p. 2).

Nearly a century later, sexual education in public schools is still somewhat of a debate issue between those who wish to preserve sexual education as the right of the parent or legal guardian of a child and those who feel that circumventing sexual education such that every child is guaranteed a certain and realistic education on the matter; remains a common topic at PTA meetings around the country.

The issue of condom availability is certainly not immune to controversy but never the less, has become relatively common and appropriate. Sexual education in general, has matured from a topic shrouded in shame and social

taboo to one of centrifugal interest, “ The extreme anxiety about sex expressed itself partly through the proliferation of advice manuals. Works such as John Todd’s 1837 Student’s Manual were well within the tradition of Ben Franklin’s Improving Literature” (Moran, 2000, p. 4).

The dichotomy surrounding condom availability in public schools is whether or not it condones promiscuity, even though it is an essential means of preventing teen pregnancy and the spread of HIV. What many of those who embrace the idea that passing out condoms promotes promiscuity do not realize, is that teens do not need permission from society or from authority figures to engage in sexual activity. (Moran, 2000, p. 16). In fact, those who prefer to remain sexually inactive, will do so regardless of the presence or availability of condoms. Those who are already sexually active or intend to become sexually active, will initiate or continue sexual activity regardless of whether there is an availability of condoms or not. Certainly, the chances of high school students visiting the drug store with a minimum of 10\$ to spare for a pack of condoms, is a highly unlikely scenario. So unlikely in fact, that the frequency of unprotected sexual activity in the presence of no condom availability would be of mass proportion spreading STD’s from student to student. Teen pregnancy would be at alarmingly high rates initiating epidemics in not only the arena of teen pregnancy but also in the are of the contraction and spread of STD’s.

Promoting Good Teenage Health At first glance can mean the simple act of making condoms available in high schools which seems to be an antiquated policy that is inappropriate in regard to the age of the participants, the location, and the motivation underlying the program. Yet, the high school is the one place where teens congregate, socialize, and receive information.

<https://assignbuster.com/condom-distribution-in-high-schools/>

There is no better place to reach nearly this entire age bracket within an environment of respect and dignity. Just a generation ago the issue of providing high school students with condoms would have been met with embarrassment, and advocates would have been demonized as sexual deviants. However, greater public awareness of the tragedy of an unwanted teenage pregnancy, the high incidence of sexually transmitted disease, and the looming possibility of contracting AIDS have brought the issue out of the closet and into the classroom. Issuing condoms to high school students is a responsible act taken to protect the health and well being of our children in light of contemporary public perceptions and current social realities.

Critics of the condom distribution program will contend that the easy availability of condoms will encourage students to engage in sexual activity that they would otherwise avoid, because it is believed that the activity gives social legitimacy to teenage sex. Critics further contend that in addition to this legitimacy is a false sense of safety when as many as fifteen percent of condoms fail, and opponents suggest that the only ethical approach is to recommend and teach abstinence (Tifft, Mihok, and Willwerth). Monsignor John Woolsey of New York's Roman Catholic Archdiocese argues that the program amounts to a "ratification of sexual promiscuity", even in the face of the social reality of New York where teenage AIDS is at seven times the national average.

Rather than encouraging sexual activity in teens, the condom programs are simply responding to a problem that already exists and is running out of control. The fact is that students who are sexually active are more likely to use a condom when they are available than when they are not distributed. Dodd reports that, "sexually active students in New York, where there is a

condom availability program, were more likely to report using a condom at last intercourse than were those in Chicago, where condoms are not available in school (60.8 to 55.5 percent)". In addition, the fear of an exploding rate of teenage sexual activity has not come as a result of the program. When condoms were made readily available to high school students in Philadelphia, "the number of students ever having intercourse dropped from seventy-five to sixty-six percent, while condom use at last intercourse rose from thirty-seven to fifty percent" (Dodd). These numbers are significant and translate to fewer unwanted pregnancies, fewer abortions, and fewer students burdened with a life living with AIDS. While there are direct benefits to the health and well being of the students, there is also the beneficial by-product of the educational opportunities that the program presents. In New York, the free condoms come as part of an AIDS educational program that includes a booklet on how to use them and the opportunity to attend sex counseling (Tifft, Mihok, and Willwerth, 2008). The program offers responsible behavior as an alternative to an unspoken taboo. A similar program in Chicago involving adolescent inner city males found that the addition of education resulted in "significant changes in reproductive health knowledge reported among adolescent males" and "After six months in the program, more than half of the young men had been to a clinic for reproductive health services, as compared to fifteen percent at intake" (Mosen, Ely, Ho, and Ruch-Ross, 2008). The distribution of free condoms gives educators a chance to address a sensitive issue and provide the information necessary to take sex seriously and approach the subject responsibly. The condom distribution programs in high schools has not resulted in the explosion of sexual permissiveness that the critics fear and

<https://assignbuster.com/condom-distribution-in-high-schools/>

have warned about. Instead the programs have resulted in more students using condoms and may actually reduce the level of sexual activity. Indeed, the issue is not one that can be ignored and buried with any sense of safety. Teenage pregnancy and AIDS can destroy the dreams of the teenager who is drawn into sexual activity by biology and misinformation. The distribution of condoms allows educators and health workers to reach these teens that are having sex and allow them to promote education and awareness to this critical segment of the population. The free condom program in high schools is a timely approach to begin controlling a problem whose social sensitivity has traditionally made it difficult to engage, discuss, and act on in this responsible manner to save the lives and life of our children.

Works Cited

- Dodd, Keri J. " School Condom Availability." Advocates for Youth. Advocates for Youth. 5 Nov. 2008 [http://www. advocatesforyouth. org/publications/factsheet/fsschcon. htm](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/factsheet/fsschcon.htm).
- Jensen, Robin., (2007), " Using Science to Argue for Sexual Education in U. S. Public Schools", West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press.
- Moran, Jeffrey, P., (2000), " Teaching Sex", United States of America, Harvard University Press.
- Mosena, Pat W., Janice Ely, Joyce Ho, and Holly H. Ruch-Ross. " Peer Advocates for Health." BNET Business Network 2004. 5 Nov. 2008 [http://findarticles. com/p/articles/mi_m0PAU/is_3_3/ai_n13733411/pg_9](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PAU/is_3_3/ai_n13733411/pg_9)
- Tifft, Susan, Katherine L. Mihok, and James Willwerth. " Better Safe Than Sorry?" Time 21 Jan. 1991. 5 Nov. 2008 .