

Katherine elizabeth hoelscher

Family, Teenage Pregnancy



Katherine Elizabeth Hoelscher High school AP English February 27, 2007 Sex Education: It's Worth the Whole Picture Education is a key element in the life of an adolescent; it is the factor that establishes their future. While reading, writing, and arithmetic are the spotlights of our education system today, sex education is just as large of a part. Sex education is not only what establishes our awareness of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), but also another life changing event - teen pregnancy. What if there was something someone could do to help prevent these two undesired events? There is, the education system of America can be forthright and give students a broader knowledge of sex education. A definition by Wikipedia states that sex education is a broad term used to describe education about human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse, and other aspects of human sexual behavior. Sex education is divided into two main branches; comprehensive sex education and abstinence-only sex education. The two methods have the same basic purposes but vary in their overall message. Comprehensive sex education teaches that abstinence is the best method for avoiding STDs and unintended pregnancy, but it also teaches students about condoms and contraception. It also teaches interpersonal communication skills and helps young people explore their own values, goals, and personal options (" Sex Education Programs: Definitions & Point-by-Point Comparison"). Comprehensive sex education allows adolescents to learn all of the facts of sex, including contraception, if they choose to live a sexually active life style, while protecting them from STDs and unexpected pregnancy. On the other hand, the abstinence-only method of sex education conservatively teaches the prevention of STDs and unintended pregnancy.

Abstinence-only sex education teaches abstinence as the only morally correct option of sexual expression for teenagers. The Advocates for Youth says abstinence-only sex education censors information about contraception and condoms for the prevention of STDs and unintended pregnancy. Instead of teaching a complete range of information dealing with sex education, the abstinence-only method deliberately omits information about contraception and other ways of preventing STDs and unintended pregnancy, no one wants to take a course that completely skips vital information. By using abstinence-only sex education, the education system of America is putting numerous adolescents at risk for STDs like the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and unintended pregnancies. According to Figure 1 from the " National Vital Statistics Reports, " the number of unmarried mothers among teenagers between 15 and 19 years of age in 1982 makes up a greater percentage of total adolescent pregnancies in the United States compared to earlier years. By changing the way the American school system teaches sex education, the birthrate of teens' statistic could go down overall, followed by the number of teens who get married prematurely because of unintended pregnancies. The majority of adolescents who get pregnant prematurely do so because of either their lack of knowledge from the " censored information" they were taught in abstinence-only sex education, or the improper use of one of the multiple contraception methods. Teen parents are not prepared enough to go into their adult life concerned with both their own future and their baby's. Comprehensive sex education delays the onset of sexual behavior; reduces the number of partners a young adult has; and increases the likelihood that when the teen does engage in sexual activity he or she will be more

prepared to protect themselves against unintended pregnancies and STDs by using contraceptives (Grigsby, Tamara and Rector, Robert). By using comprehensive sex education the number of teens with unintended pregnancies would go down greatly as would the number of people with STDs in general. Annette Fuentes, author of " No Sex Ed, " describes abstinence-only sex education as a preventer of out-of-wedlock births. Tamara Grigsby and Robert Rector contradict Annette Fuentes' bias statement with a statistic showing students from many high schools actually increased their sexual behavior after completing federal abstinence-only courses. The Government of The United States of America has set aside \$170 million in the 2005 federal budget for the purpose of funding abstinence-only sex education (Brown, Ashley). According to Robert Rector, author of "' Good Sex for Teens': The War Against Abstinence, " the government wants to start spending \$12 teaching contraception for every \$1 they spend on abstinence-only courses, which is a great step in the right direction for the federal government. Others can help in beginning the fight for more complete sex education for the future at [www. advocatesforyouth. org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org). As difficult as it may be, parents of adolescents can help too by talking to their teens about contraceptive use and abstinence as prevention of STDs and unexpected pregnancies that could send tremors to their adolescent's delicate future. Knowledge is power, so let's give adolescents the power to prevent STDs and unexpected pregnancy by giving them the facts; all of the facts. Sex Education: It's Worth the Whole Picture: Works Cited " Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education Censors Vital Health Care Information, " Jeopardizing Teenagers' Health." ACLU. 1 Dec 2004. American Civil Liberties

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