

They're here. they're
sexual. get used to it.

Business



“ Don't have sex.

Because you will get pregnant. And die.” These lines from the infamous movie Mean Girls show the humorous side of chastity education's many problems. A well-rounded sex education curriculum gives students accurate information without censoring and does not cater to religious groups as chastity education often does. It also encourages critical thinking skills by giving teenagers the tools they need to make informed decision, rather than trying to evade inevitable hormones.

Chastity education, on the other hand, is ineffective and provides false information to dissuade teenagers from having sex. For these reasons, students should be given a comprehensive sex education, rather than abstinence-only sex education. While comprehensive sex education classes usually manage to walk the fine line between informative and intimate, chastity education resorts to wildly inaccurate information to deter students from having sex. Those against comprehensive sex education say that schools are an inappropriate venue for learning about sex; however, their method involves essentially brainwashing teenagers with horror stories. According to the Committee on Public Reform, eleven out of thirteen federally funded abstinence-only programs feed students false information for millions of dollars.

As a result, there are teenagers walking about who believe that touching a person's genitals can result in pregnancy, and that HIV can be spread “ via sweat and tears” (Committee on Public Reform). Various federally funded abstinence-only curricula also “ push gender stereotypes” as well as give

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students inaccurate information (Government Accountability Office). Comprehensive sex education, on the other hand, provides accurate information and a variety of programs designed for different socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Though some complain that students are taught too much in these programs, this information has helped reduce teenage pregnancy by 50% more than abstinence-only programs have (Advocates for Youth). By providing teenagers with unbiased information, comprehensive sex education classes have proved far more effective than abstinence-only curricula.

Those against comprehensive sex education also claim that too many gory details are harmful to teenagers. For this reason, abstinence-only classes not only give false information but also completely block information from students, according to Marjorie Hein's novel *Not In Front of the Children: 'Indecency,' Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth*. Heins, a First Amendment attorney, found that schools that censor sex education material do so under the guise of preventing "harm to minors" (*Not In Front of the Children*, Heins) though this material has not been proven to have any negative effect whatsoever. This censorship leads to children not having "the critical thinking skills necessary for living in a democratic society." For example, the Texas Education Code requires sex education classes to give more attention to abstinence than any other contraceptive method, and that no law mandates the mention of condoms or other effective contraceptives.

In fact, only one in four state-approved sex education textbooks use the word "condom" at all (Texas Monthly). This censorship is hardly effective. Texas is the number one state for teenage pregnancies, and 52.5% of Texan
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teenagers are having or have had sex (Center for American Progress). These censoring abstinence classes are best summed up by the Center for American Progress-“ designed not to work.” If comprehensive sex education programs teach too much, at least they teach students something.

Lastly, religious groups claim that preaching chastity should be favored over comprehensive sex education classes because doing otherwise would be offensive to their religion. This claim is entirely invalid and serves to illustrate the poor separation of church and school. The Plymouth Brethren, whose core belief is “ separation from evil and worldly influences,” fought New York state mandates to keep their children from attending AIDS prevention classes. Sharon Lerner’s article in *The American Prospect*, called “ The Sex-Ed Divide,” also shows what can happen when religion interferes with education. In Osseo, Minnesota, a group of parents known as the “ prayer warriors,” irrevocably changed the course of sex education in Osseo.

The prayer warriors regularly attended meetings of Osseo’s Human Sexuality Curriculum Advisory Committee, an organization that was originally just a suggestion box to the school board on how to update material. Through months of explosive debate with a clear religious split, the prayer warriors had many of their own ideologies approved by the school board, as well as a new definition of sexual intercourse. Rather than an act between “ any two people,” sex was now defined in Osseo as an act between married parents “ of opposite sex” (“ The Sex-Ed Divide,” Lerner). The prayer warriors’ effect extended beyond simple definitions; abstinence teachers in Maple Grove Senior High can only “ discuss only [birth control’s] failures and emphasize its inadequacy” as a roundabout way to discourage students from having

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sex. Students, in order to appease their religious parents, also “steered clear of the good stuff” about birth control while making presentations on sexually transmitted diseases. Carol Christensen’s loopy argument, “Like who’s going to go and take out a measuring spoon and measure out the exact spermicide at 1:30 in the morning on a Tuesday night?” (“The Sex-Ed Divide,” Lerner) sums up the negative effect of chastity education on schools, communities, and most importantly teenagers.

In summary, a comprehensive sex education curriculum is superior to abstinence-only sex education. Comprehensive sex education classes give students accurate information, allowing them to make informed decisions, while chastity classes inaccuracy information to brainwash students out of making their own choices. Also, not censoring information promotes First Amendment rights, while curriculums that censor information can impair the critical thinking skills teenagers need in our democratic world. Lastly, chastity education is often intertwined with religion, which leads to bias in the information taught—rather, the information allowed to be taught. Is it worth it to funnel millions of dollars into chastity curriculums that are unconstitutional, inaccurate, and ineffective? According to *Rethinking Schools*, when it comes to the supremacy of comprehensive sex education—“[Teens] are here.

They’re sexual. Get used to it.”