



***In Good Company:
Who Supports Comprehensive Sexuality Education?***

If you support comprehensive sexuality education—medically accurate, age-appropriate education that includes information about abstinence and contraception—then you are in good company.

Medical, Scientific, and Public Health Communities Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** recommends that pediatricians “encourage adolescents to postpone early sexual activity[,]...[h]elp ensure that all adolescents have knowledge of and access to contraception including barrier methods and emergency contraception supplies...[and]...advocate for implementation and investments in evidence-based programs that provide comprehensive information and services to youth.”¹
- **The American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)** believes that “investing in comprehensive sex education that includes support for abstinence but also provides risk-reduction information” would be a more effective HIV-prevention strategy for young people than simply an abstinence-only message.²
- **The American Medical Association (AMA)** “urges schools to implement comprehensive, developmentally appropriate sexuality education programs” and “supports federal funding of comprehensive sex education programs that stress the importance of abstinence in preventing unwanted teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and also teach about contraceptive choices and safer sex.”³
- **The American Psychological Association (APA)** recommends that “comprehensive and empirically supported sex education and HIV-prevention programs become widely available to teach youth how to abstain from risky sexual behaviors and learn how they can protect themselves against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.”⁴ In addition, APA recommends that “public funding for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programs be given priority over funding for the implementation of abstinence-only...programs.”⁵
- **The American Public Health Association (APHA)** urges that abstinence be “provided within public health programs that provide adolescents with complete and accurate information about sexual health. Such programs should be medically accurate and developmentally appropriate...[and] based on theories and strategies with demonstrated evidence of effectiveness. Current federal funding for abstinence-only programs...should be repealed and replaced with funding for a new federal program to promote comprehensive sexuality education.”⁶
- **The Institute of Medicine (IOM)** recommends that “Congress, as well as other federal, state, and local policymakers, eliminate the requirements that public funds be used for abstinence-only education, and that states and local school districts implement and continue to support age-appropriate comprehensive sex education and condom availability.”⁷
- **The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM)** finds that, “Efforts to promote abstinence should be provided within health education programs that provide adolescents with complete and accurate information about sexual health, including information about concepts of healthy sexuality, sexual orientation and tolerance, personal responsibility, risks of HIV and other STIs and unwanted pregnancy, access to reproductive health care, and benefits and risks of condoms and other contraceptive methods...Current funding for abstinence-only programs should be replaced with funding for programs that offer comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education.”⁸

Religious Communities Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- Eight religious denominations and the Office of Family Ministries and Human Sexuality, National Council of Churches of Christ, have policies supporting sexuality education in schools. The denominations are: Central Conference of American Rabbis, Church of the Brethren, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Union for Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church.⁹

The Education Community Supports Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- **The National Education Association (NEA)** recommends SIECUS' *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: K-12* as a resource in developing appropriate school-based curricula.¹⁰ The NEA, through its Health Information Network, "stresses medically accurate sex education that includes information on abstinence, family planning, and problems associated with preteen and teenage pregnancies. NEA urges increased federal funding for such comprehensive programs."¹¹
- **The American School Health Association (ASHA)** "supports comprehensive health and sexuality education programs in the schools, from kindergarten through the 12th grade. The content of this education should include medically accurate and developmentally appropriate discussions of sexuality, reproduction, fertility, methods of contraception, decision-making, delaying first intercourse, abstinence, risk assessment and risk reduction, and sexually transmitted disease prevention, with special emphasis placed on the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)."¹²

The American Public Overwhelmingly Supports Comprehensive Sexuality Education

- A 2004 national poll of parents found that 93% of parents of junior high school students and 91% of parents of high school students believe it is very or somewhat important to have sexuality education as part of the school curriculum.¹³
- 72% of parents of junior high school students and 65% of parents of high school students stated that federal government funding "should be used to fund more comprehensive sex education programs that include information on how to obtain and use condoms and other contraceptives" instead of funding sex education programs that have "abstaining from sexual activity" as their only purpose.¹⁴
- Almost nine in ten self-described conservative Evangelical or born-again Christians support the teaching of sexuality education in schools.¹⁵
- More than 6 in 10 voters would be more likely to vote for a candidate that supported comprehensive sexuality education.¹⁶

¹ Jonathon Klein and the Committee on Adolescence, "Adolescent Pregnancy: Current Trends and Issues" *Pediatrics* (2005): 281-286.

² *Issue Brief: Assessing the Efficacy of Abstinence-Only Programs for HIV Prevention among Young People* (Washington, DC: American Foundation for AIDS Research, April 2005).

³ Policy Statement, *H-170.968 Sexuality Education, Abstinence, and Distribution of Condoms in Schools*, American Medical Association, accessed 04 January 2007, <http://www.ama-assn.org/apps/pf_new/pf_online?f_n=browse&doc=policyfiles/HnE/H-170.968.HTM>.

⁴ American Psychologists Association, *Based on the Research, Comprehensive Sex Education is More Effective at Stopping the Spread of HIV Infection, Says APA Committee*, Press Release published 23 February 2005, accessed 19 May 2005, <<http://www.apa.org/releases/sexeducation.html>>.

⁵ "Resolution in Favor of Empirically Supported Sex Education and HIV Prevention Programs for Adolescents," American Psychologists Association. 18-20 February, accessed 4 January 2007, <http://www.apa.org/releases/sexed_resolution.pdf>.

⁶ Policy Statement, "Abstinence and U.S. Abstinence-Only Education Policies: Ethical and Human Rights Concerns," American Public Health Association, 8 November 2006, accessed 3 January 2007, <<http://www.apha.org/legislative/policy/policysearch/index.cfm?fuseaction=view&id=1332>>.

⁷ M.S. Ruiz, et al., *No Time to Lose: Getting More from HIV Prevention* (Washington, D.C: Institute of Medicine, 2000), 6.

⁸ John Santelli, et. al., "Abstinence-only education policies and programs: A position paper for the Society for Adolescent Medicine," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38 (2006): 83-87.

⁹ *An Open Letter to Religious Leaders about Sex Education* (Norwalk, CT: Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing, 2002).

¹⁰ *Sexual Health, the Role of School Personnel*, National Education Association, accessed 19 May 2005, <http://www.neahin.org/resources/docs/Sexual_Health_HIN_Flyer.pdf>.

¹¹ National Education Association, "NEA Urges Accurate Health Education," Press Release published 8 October 2003, accessed 4 January 2007, <<http://www.nea.org/newsreleases/2003/nr031008.html>>.

¹² ASHA Position Statement, "Comprehensive Sexual Health Education," American School Health Association (8 October 2002), accessed 4 January 2007, <http://www.ashastd.org/news/news_stmts_education.cfm>.

¹³ *Sex Education in America: General Public/Parents Survey*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ *Sex Education in America: General Public/Parents Survey* (Washington, DC: NPR, Kaiser Family Foundation, Kennedy School of Government, 2004), Table 3.

¹⁶ *Mobilizing Support for Sex Education: New Messages and Techniques* (New York, NY: The Othmer Institute of Planned Parenthood of NYC, 2002).