



# Talking to Our Kids About Sex - Parents and Schools Working Together!

At home and in school the goal of abstinence and sexuality education is to help our young people develop a positive view of sexuality, provide them information to take care of their emotional and physical health, and help them develop skills to make healthy decisions now and in the future.

Parents are the primary educator of their child's sexuality education. That is why it is essential that parents and schools work together to ensure that consistent messages reach our youth. The most important predictors of the current and future health status of our young people are consistent messages from home, school, and community coupled with knowledge, skills and the belief that one can use the skills to change one's life.

When it comes to sex education, most parents do want the schools help in teaching their children. Parents realize there are many health risks associated with sexual activity including HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and unintended pregnancy. Parents don't feel equipped to do the job alone.

Parents often assume that sex education is being taught early and often. This is not always the case. School administrators need to hear from parents about what they would like to see included in their schools' curriculum.



## ELEMENTARY

This is a time when students' bodies start to change as they move into adolescence. Signs of puberty are hair growth in new places, menstruation, body odor, lower voice in boys, and breast growth in girls. Today, kids are exposed to so much information about sex and relationships on television and the internet even before puberty. Often this information is not reliable and gives mixed messages. This is why instruction in school and discussions at home that are accurate and complement each other are essential.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL

As students approach the teen years, physical and emotional changes become more dramatic and complicated. It is common for kids to compare themselves with their peers and have a strong desire to fit in. The adolescent brain is struggling to grow, interact, connect and develop during the teen years. This is why just teaching facts or "just say no" is not enough. Along with the facts, adolescents need to learn and practice skills to keep them safe. Instruction that includes skill building such as communication, negotiation and refusal skills is critical.



### PARENTS, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- Meet with the principal to find out what is currently being taught.
- Contact your school and encourage them to survey parents and find out what topics they want taught at specific levels.
- Volunteer to serve on the school health advisory committee
- Work with community organizations to host workshops for parents on the importance of talking with their child about abstinence and sexuality.