Sex Education: A Review of Literature

Ana E. Madrid

University of Texas at El Paso
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abstract

Sex Education is taught in most Elementary, Middle, and High School to inform the students about different contraceptives for sexual activity among young adults. Many parents may not feel that is acceptable to teach their children and prefer them to be taught Abstinence. This literature review will inform the reader about the ways schools, and adults can better become informed to teach Sex Education. This Literature Review provides the views of parents, teachers, and most of all the community which they are concerned about how they feel Sex Education should be taught and the well-being of the teenagers.
Sex Education: A Review of the Literature

Sex Education is defined as referring to formal programs of instruction on a wide range of issues relating to human sexuality, including human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexual intercourse, reproductive health, emotional relations, reproductive rights and responsibilities, abstinence, contraception, and other aspects of human sexual behavior. Common avenues for sex education are parents or caregivers, school programs, and public health campaigns. Since about sixth grade, which is either in elementary, or middle school, these programs have used the programs of sex education for most health educators start to teach young children about their body parts and the differences of puberty among each of the children. This continues on through High School; with about a semester only, but most educators do not think it is enough. Many parents may also agree, but may be picky on what they want their child to know about sex. Because sex education is a sensitive topic, and most teenagers get the wrong information through a friend, the internet, or the television. In order to better understand the standards and differing views concerning Sex Education, the following for questions will be answered:

1. What would parents prefer is taught in the Sex Education classes/programs?
2. Which of the following does a teenager know about already, abstinence or contraceptives?
3. If schools do provide sex education, what would be better for the student to know?
4. Is there a preferred grade that parents want taught in a sex education class?

The following review on literature will focus on these questions and will provide information about Sex Education in the schools and how it affects adolescents and its effectiveness.

What parents prefer is taught in the Sex Education classes/programs?
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This may sound like the easiest question to answer, but sadly it is the hardest. Many parents may just feel as though only abstinence should be the only thing taught, because, “Years ago, sex was a topic broached by uncomfortable parents, telling their young ones about the miracle of life and the birds and the bees”, claimed by the Medill News in Chicago (2008). And this fact may be true because it is an uncomfortable topic among parents and teenagers to have to face. Parents want to be able to trust their kids in making the right decisions when it comes to sexual intercourse. The right decisions would include the parents talking to their children about abstinence, or safe sex, which include contraceptives. But because of teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, parents feel as though abstinence is the best policy among their teenagers. The Mayo Clinic (2012), which is a clinic, which addresses most issues that parents may have for their teenagers in the education of safe sex, abstinence, and contraceptives, says “Awkward as it may be, sex education is a parent's responsibility. By reinforcing and supplementing what your teen learns in school, you can set the stage for a lifetime of healthy sexuality,” about Sex Education. This is to help and to support a concerned parent with their children when it comes to talking to them about sex education. Parents should just lay it all out there for their teen so that the child knows what to expect in sex education. Parents should also feel comfortable for the child’s teacher to talk about all matters of sex education, even if the parent does not feel comfortable with the subject. Parents in a way should be able to understand what really needs to be taught in a sex education class. Even if the parent is not happy with what their child is learning in the health class, they need to know the information is getting to their child and that their child is learning is the right information among what the parent should be
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

able to talk about when it comes to such a taboo topic in sexual intercourse. Sex is something all parents need to talk to their children about.

Which is more important to teenagers, abstinence, or contraceptives?

Abstinence is the practice of refraining from any kind of sexual activity for any kind of reason being. Contraceptives are a form of birth control methods use to practice safe sex. Abstinence Education is a teaching method taught by educators to either inform about safe sex, contraceptives, and/or sex until marriage. These methods may be taught in many schools around America and throughout the world. Educators and parents may hope that teenagers use precautions regarding sexual intercourse. Teenagers may feel as though contraceptives may be better for themselves to include being safe for any type of sexual activity. Parents may choose to help out the teenagers, by providing them with contraceptives, but to exactly informing them on the proper issues. The website StayTeen.Org (2012) claims that, “The most effective birth control of all: Not having sex. It’s the only ‘method’ that can provide a 100% guarantee of no pregnancy and no Sexually Transmitted Infections”, in order to help prevent these things among teenagers. Since there are a lot of other different methods to help out teenagers understand what they need to know about contraceptives, it is best to inform them about the many ways of either getting pregnant or catching a Sexually Transmitted Disease. If you let the teenagers decide for themselves, it may not be a good choice. With the many facts and information regarding abstinence education, and/or contraceptives, having precautions may always be the best things for young adults to know, but knowing the facts are much better to keep you and your partner currently informed.

If schools do provide sex education, what would be better for the student to know?
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE
The main subjects in Sex Education must include Abstinence Education, Pregnancy/and/or STD/HIV prevention and Family Planning. According to Deborah Anne Dawson, author of “The Effects of Sex Education on Adolescent Behavior”, (1986) she claims that “The age at which formal contraceptive education is first provided has been declining.” In the book, certain age groups have been receiving certain information at later ages in life all at which Dawson “feels should be at an earlier age”. The organization, Advocates for Youth (2012), say that “Every hour of every day, two American young people contract HIV, 96 become pregnant, and nearly 350 more contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD). This means that by the end of today, almost 50 young Americans contract HIV, almost 2500 will have become pregnant, and nearly 8500 more will contract a sexually transmitted disease.” Stating this kind of information should be enough to tell educators what should be taught in the sex education classes. Because this is just a statistic among American teenagers, most teens may or may not believe this study. Many will say this is just another fact put out there, but they really need to know the kind of information that is put out there for them. Ignoring and knowing only as much as teenagers want to know will put them in that spot of either becoming a young mom or dad, or have them be a statistic and get a Sexually Transmitted Disease. A non-representative online survey was conducted by the author at the University of Texas at El Paso, or UTEP. Subjects who participated in the online survey belonged to various socio-economic, age, and cultural demographics. They were asked what they felt should be taught in a sex education class. Figure 1. Chart depicting responses to survey conducted by the author. The bar depicts what the percentage of people feel is more important to be taught in sex education.
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Out of the 58 students, 51 or 87.9% felt as though abstinence education is the most important thing to teach in a sex education class. There is no specific number of what really should be taught in sex education among and these results cannot be generalized to the entire UTEP community, but they do demonstrate that students are following some standards to show what they feel should be taught in a health class. On the other hand, family planning and abstinence were the lowest of what most people think should be taught in a sex education class. In order to show what the most people think what is and what is not more important in a sex education class, more schools should listen to not only the parents, and the students, but also the community because it might make a difference of what schools should provide in a health class.

Is there a preferred grade that parents want taught in a sex education class?

Sex Education is currently taught in elementary school, only in physical education and it is taught in Middle School, but only one semester and the same for high school in the United States of America. Sex Education is an important part of a teenager’s life. Having the right information provided should be a given at all school levels. Every level at least in middle school and high
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

school needs to teach the students about Sex Education and how important it is. Exposing children at an early age to sex education could may be help them to understand what is in store for them when they go into their health class to learn all about what they need to know.

“Comprehensive sex Education is effective, and does not promote sexual risks,” (2012) as said according to the website Youth for Advocates. The website goes on to say Research has identified highly effective sex education and HIV prevention programs that affect multiple behaviors and/or achieve positive health impacts”, so that parents may feel comfortable at any age for their children to learn about sex education at any school level.

Conclusion:

In Conclusion, sex education is one of the most important classes that need to be taught in high school. There should be certain programs to help out teenagers do what they need to. As said in time magazine, “Substantial research--including a (2007) Bush Administration report--has concluded that comprehensive programs are most effective at changing teen sexual behaviors. They are also largely uncontroversial outside Washington. Vast majorities of parents favor teaching comprehensive sex education.” Certain things like these programs should and will help the teens with sex education. If most parents were very involved with the schools, and how they teach with taboo topics such as sex education, they would realize how effective programs of sex education are, and they would not have to think or worry about what their children are retaining from the class. Whether or not parents and students listen to studies or reports of sex education regarding what should be taught in the particular class, parents should expect their children to learn information about sex whether it is abstinence or contraceptives and be able to be okay with it.
SEX EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

References:

A. Anderson & A. Sullivan (2009) How to bring an end to the war over Sex Ed Retrieved From: http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1886558-3,00.html


Sex Education Image Figure 1.FY 2008 Federal Funding for Adolescents Source: HHS Retrieved from: http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/AbstinenceEducation/report.shtml

