



COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION CASE STUDY: Fresno Unified School District, 2009-2010

Fresno Unified School District has implemented components of a comprehensive sexual health education program in grades 5 - 9. This program is informed by their recently updated district policy¹ on *Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Instruction*, as well as a related administrative regulation.² To review the sexual health curricula, a Family Life Advisory Committee was convened. The committee was comprised of teachers, parents, and community members including representation from health care, family planning and clergy. The school district uses a blended parent consent process. Fifth and sixth grade sexual health instruction requires active consent (parent/guardian must return a signed consent form for student to participate), and parents are invited to participate in a formal program description and Q & A session prior to classes beginning. In middle and high school, a passive consent process is utilized, whereby the notification form is only returned if the student may not participate.

In Fresno USD, sexual health education is incorporated into regular self-contained or core classes. Fifth graders learn about puberty, growth, and development from their teachers and school nurses. Sixth graders learn about puberty, reproductive anatomy and physiology, and even more importantly, are taught the personal and social skills needed to resist pressure to have sex with the *Sex Can Wait* curriculum. Both 7th and 9th graders are taught HIV/AIDS prevention education using the *Positive Prevention* curriculum and in some cases, also using the *Human Sexuality* supplement to the *Glencoe Health* textbook. In 7th grade, this prevention education is taught by science teachers, while sociology teachers often deliver the education to 9th graders. Some high school classes are receiving comprehensive sexual health education from a district-approved community –based organization that specializes in delivering this education.

An experienced Fresno USD teacher on special assignment (TSA) provides annual sexual health education training to these staff. Teachers and nurses participate in this training prior to delivering sex education and then receive periodic updates. Topics covered include mandated sexual health education requirements (as outlined in Ed Code) and California’s health education content standards. The TSA also outlines the information covered in the curricular lessons, and models how to lead group discussions and activities. Teachers share the types of questions they might be asked and identify how to align their responses with state standards.

District staff note that students need factual, age-appropriate sexual health education beginning in 5th grade, and uniformly implemented in all designated core classes and grade levels district wide. They find that otherwise, students receive misinformation from both peers and the media. The media, in particular, dangerously “normalize” early sexualization, without providing factual information or helping instill in children and adolescents the skills they need to develop healthy relationships and delay sexual activity. Fresno USD has found that one cannot assume that students will get this critical education anywhere but at school, so they have committed internal resources to train and support their teachers.

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¹ <http://www.fresno.k12.ca.us/boardpolicies/fusd/displaypolicy/144103/6.htm>

² <http://www.fresno.k12.ca.us/boardpolicies/fusd/displaypolicy/143672/6.htm>