

Introduction

This is a curriculum designed by the Public Health – Seattle & King County, Family Planning Program. It consists of thirty lesson plans for high school freshmen and sophomores (grades nine and ten). There is a separate **F.L.A.S.H.** curriculum for use in middle and high school special education classes.

The **goals** of **F.L.A.S.H.** are to assist in the development of persons:

- who are knowledgeable about human development and reproduction,
- who respect and appreciate themselves, their families and all persons,
- who will neither exploit others nor allow themselves to be exploited.

A word about **philosophy** . . .

It is not possible — or even desirable — to provide value-free education. In fact, the very provision of education implies the value that knowledge is better than ignorance. The job of a public school teacher, however, is to distinguish between:

relatively **universal values** (those shared by 95+% of families, or specifically written into law or policy ... which the teacher is, in fact, expected to teach),

and **controversial issues** (those the community is not in agreement over ... and on which the teacher ought not to express his or her own personal belief).

What are the relatively **universal values** upon which this curriculum is predicated?
Some are...

- 1.) that each individual (regardless of age; gender; family constellation; gender identity, role, or orientation; physical or mental abilities; race; religion or ethnic identity) is unique, valuable, and deserving of equal and considerate treatment.
- 2.) that the human body and its capacity for sexual response and reproduction are fascinating, terrific, and deserving of protection.
- 3.) that human beings' need for touch and intimacy is valid and should be respected.
- 4.) that no one has the right to selfishly use another person, simply for his or her own gratification.
- 5.) that it is wrong to trick, threaten, tease or force another person to touch.
- 6.) that it is safest (emotionally, physically, and socially) and best for school-aged people not to engage in sexual intercourse.
- 7.) that sex is safest and best in loving, long-term, committed, monogamous relationships (as in many marriages).
- 8.) that it is wrong to knowingly transmit disease.
- 9.) that honest communication is fundamental to all human relationships (parent/child, friend/friend, partner/partner, patient/health care provider).
- 10.) that no one should feel obligated to share personal experiences, feelings or beliefs with acquaintances (and that includes most classrooms).
- 11.) that a classroom should be an emotionally safe place to learn.

- 12.) that people have an obligation to learn as much as they can about themselves and those they care about.
- 13.) that families are important and deserve support.
- 14.) that parents are the first and foremost sexuality educators, and are especially obligated to communicate their beliefs and feelings to their children.
- 15.) that schools have an obligation to help families educate young people about sexual health, especially to communicate factual information and teach survival skills.
- 16.) that students deserve answers to their questions.

Special Preparation: Before Beginning the Unit

Knowing Your State and Local Guidelines

It is important, morally and legally, that you follow the guidelines established by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (in Washington) or Department of Education (in other states/countries) and your district's School Board.

Essentially, in Washington, the State Superintendent leaves the decision about WHETHER to teach sexuality up to the local school board. The State does, however, make recommendations for districts that DO teach it, regarding HOW it should be taught. For the complete text of the guidelines, see *Appendix C: Washington State Laws and Guidelines Related to Sexuality Education*.

Unless your district has already approved **9/10 F.L.A.S.H.**, contact your curriculum office at least a few weeks before you plan to begin a sexuality unit to find out its policies.

Planning a Sexuality "Unit"

This curriculum supplement addresses ten (10) topics in its thirty (30) lesson plans. It is not necessary to confine yourself to thirty sessions, nor to address the topics in the exact order presented here. It is also by no means essential that you approach them on consecutive days.

You are welcome to use part or all of this material as you see fit. However, we recommend that ninth and tenth grade students study all of these topics at some point.

Preparing Yourself

It is a good idea to read through this curriculum before you launch into teaching any part of it.

You may also want to refresh yourself in content by perusing one or more of the following books, reports and web sites:

14 & Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents. *Bill Albert, Sarah Brown, and Christine M. Flanigan, Editors; 2003; \$15; ISBN 15867104501; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy*

Boy V. Girl? How Gender Shapes Who We Are, What We Want, and How We Get Along. *George Abrahams, Ph.D., and Sheila Ahlbrand; 2002; \$14.95; ISBN 1575421046; Free Spirit Publishing*

Caution: Do Not Open Until Puberty!: An Introduction to Sexuality for Young Adults with Disabilities. *Rick Enright, B.A., M.S.W.; 1995; \$9.95; ISBN 0968041507; Devinjer House*

ETR's Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, <http://www.etr.org/recapp/>

It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health. *Robie H. Harris; 1996; \$10.99; ISBN 1564021599; Penguin Putnam Incorporated*

Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten - 12th Grade, Third Edition. *Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States; 2004, Available as a PDF file online: <http://www.siecus.org/pubs/guidelines/guidelines.pdf>*

Learning About Sexual Diversity at School: What Is Age Appropriate? *Beth Reis; 2004, Safe Schools Coalition. Available as a PDF file online: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/whatisageappropriate.pdf>*

Public Health – Seattle & King County's Health Educators' Tool Box, <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/educators/index.htm> (scroll to "family planning and reproductive health")

Towards a Sexually Healthy America: Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs that Try to Keep Our Youth Scared Chaste. *Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States; 2004, Available as a PDF file online: http://www.siecus.org/pubs/tsha_scaredchaste.pdf*

You may also want to observe other teachers, Public Health Educators, or school nurses teaching sexuality. Sometimes it is more useful to listen to others' styles than simply to read lesson plans.

Preparing Your Administrator

Discuss the course content, materials and activities with your building principal. S/he needs to know of outside speakers you plan to invite. S/he should also see the letter you send parents and guardians, offering to excuse their children.

The importance of involving your administrator from the outset cannot be overemphasized. The principal must be informed about your unit, in order to respond to parents' questions and concerns.

Preparing Your Students' Parents and Guardians

The primary sexuality educators of your students are their parents or guardians. Consciously or unconsciously, they have been providing sexuality education since birth. They may or may not be comfortable in their role as teachers. They may or may not be knowledgeable about the facts, but they certainly have beliefs and feelings that they share with their children.

Your role is two-fold. First, legally and morally, you must inform them that you're about to begin the unit. Your job is to offer them the options of previewing materials and/or of excusing their son or daughter. (In Washington State, parents are legally entitled to 30 days' notice before the HIV/AIDS lessons are taught.) Second, for those students who do partake of the unit, and experience tells us this is about 99 percent of all students, you can use the unit to foster better communication at home. There are several ways to do this:

- Encourage your PTA to sponsor a free workshop for parents to help them become better sexuality educators ... provided by your local health department. Within King county (WA), contact the Public Health Educator who serves your geographic area:
<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/educators/resources-for-schools.pdf>
- Encourage your PTA to sponsor a workshop on puberty and communication for parents and their students TOGETHER...offered by Planned Parenthood (in Seattle, 206-328-7715; otherwise look in the local phone book).
- Provide **homework** assignments that encourage communication, but follow these guidelines:
 - a. Explain that the student can do the assignment with any trusted adult in the family (a parent, grandparent, group home parent, parent's partner).
 - b. Always offer an alternative assignment for students who may not be able to talk with an adult in the family.
 - c. Make sure assignments are clear, purposeful and related to the content of your in-class lessons.
 - d. Never ask students to report on the content of these conversations--only that they DID talk. To ask about a student's or family's "beliefs or practices...as to sex" would violate the State Superintendent's guidelines. We suggest that you use the form in Appendix B to follow up, if you want to give credit for this type of homework.

Preparing Your Materials

This curriculum is mostly self-contained. You do not have to order A.V. materials, schedule guest speakers or organize field trips to utilize it. Simply select any lesson plans you would like to use. For each lesson you decide to use, just look at the second page to see which transparencies or worksheets you will need to photocopy and/or if there are any other materials to assemble.

How to Use FLASH

Using Worksheets

Be creative. You can use them in any of a number of ways.

- as individual extra-challenge assignments
- for pairs of students to practice cooperative review
- in groups of up to six students, as a team-building exercise
- as a whole class, aloud, to stimulate visual/aural learning while you do a chalk-talk
- for family-type homework, to encourage parent/child communication in a game format where individuals or teams compete

Using Speakers

- Talk with them in advance to make sure they understand your expectations and you understand theirs.
- Prepare your students to have paper and pencil ready, be attentive and considerate, and enjoy the change of pace.
- **STAY IN THE CLASSROOM.** State law requires that a certificated person be present at all times. Besides, you cannot do an adequate job of integrating the lesson with the rest of your curriculum and/or following up on concerns that do not get addressed, unless you have heard what the speaker and the students have said.

Using Individual Field Trips

Lesson one of **9/10 FLASH** introduces "Individual Field Trips" as student projects. They can be valuable exercises in allowing students to rehearse the utilization of community resources. Students then report back (throughout the unit) orally to the class on their visits to clinics and hospitals, places of worship, and agencies that address everything from child sexual abuse to birth defects. The success they have experienced in accessing those resources is, in turn, modeled for the whole class.

Using Anonymous Question Boxes (cans, envelopes)

- Introduce them in lesson #1.
- Read the questions in advance to give yourself time to consider how you want to answer them.
- Anticipate five types of questions:
 1. requests for information
 2. "am I normal" questions
 3. permission-seeking questions
 4. shock questions
 5. value questions

1. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ¹

If you know the answer, fine. If not, it's okay to say "I don't know", and then refer the student to the appropriate source. Is the question, although informational, one which you consider inappropriate for classroom discussion? Problems can be avoided if you have established in the context of the class ground rules, an agreement such as: "All questions are valid. However, I will have to make the final decision about the appropriateness of each question for total class discussion. If you turn in a question anonymously which I choose not to answer, it is not because it is a bad question. I may feel that it is not of interest to all students or that I am not prepared to lead a class discussion around that issue. Please see me at the end of class if this happens so that I can try to answer your question privately."

2. "AM I NORMAL" QUESTIONS ²

These questions generally focus on adolescent concerns about their bodies and the emotional and physical changes they are experiencing. Validate their concern, e.g., "Many young people worry that..." and provide information about what they can expect to happen during the adolescent years. Refer them to parents, clergy, family physician, community resources, school counselor for further discussion, if appropriate.

3. PERMISSION-SEEKING QUESTIONS ³

These come in two common forms, and may seek your permission to participate in a particular behavior, e.g.: "Is it normal...?" or "Did you...when you were growing up?" Avoid the use of the word "normal" when answering questions. Normal for some is morally unsanctionable for others. Present what is known medically, legally, etc. (the facts) and discuss the moral, religious and emotional implications, making sure all points of view are covered. Refer students to parents and clergy for discussion of moral/religious questions.

Establish in the content of class ground rules an agreement related to discussion of personal behavior, such as: "No discussion of personal behavior during class." If and when you get a question about your personal behavior, you can remind students of this ground rule and redirect the discussion to one of the pros and cons (religious, moral, medical, emotional, legal, interpersonal, etc.) of the particular behavior in question. Again, refer student to parents and clergy for further discussion of moral/ religious questions.

4. SHOCK QUESTIONS ⁴

Again, remind students of the class ground rule related to appropriate questions for classroom discussion. Sometimes the shock comes not from the content of the question, but the vocabulary utilized. You can reword the question to defuse it, especially if you have previously established in the context of class ground rules, a rule related to vocabulary, such as: "In this class I will be trying to balance two conflicting goals: I want to communicate with you. Sometimes you may not know the correct word for something you have a question about. Use whatever word you know to ask that question and I will answer using the correct (acceptable) word."

¹ Reprinted with permission from Beyond Reproduction: Tips and Techniques for Teaching Sensitive Family life Education Issues, published by Network Publications, Santa Cruz, CA. 1981

² ibid

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

Values Questions & Protocol

As we said in the Introduction, it is neither possible nor desirable to provide value-free education. Nevertheless, questions which have a value component must be answered with care, where expressing your own personal values might hurt or offend a child and their family. With some values, it's perfectly appropriate for you to express your opinion. These are those we call "relatively universal." Relatively **UNIVERSAL** values are those shared by 95% of families, values which the teacher should feel comfortable, and is in fact, **OBLIGATED** to teach.

Examples of relatively **UNIVERSAL** values:

- Forcing someone to have sex with you is wrong.
- Knowingly spreading disease is wrong.
- It's safest and healthiest for school-age kids not to have sex (this is **NOT** controversial, what **IS** controversial is when it's fine to have sex).
- Taking care of your reproductive health is important.
- Sex between children and adults is wrong.
- Adultery is wrong.

Values that are **CONTROVERSIAL** are those *without* consensus in the community. These are issues about which the teacher should **NOT** teach or express a **particular belief**. Providing information or facilitating discussion about the issues is fine.

Examples of **CONTROVERSIAL** issues that have a wide range of values in the community:

- Abortion
- Birth control
- Masturbation
- Homosexuality
- Sex outside of marriage
- Cohabitation
- What age/under what circumstances it's acceptable to start having sex

NOTE: Parents, unlike teachers, should feel free to ask your child about his or her beliefs and to share yours. In fact, this sort of dialogue within families is very important. Employees of public schools and other public agencies have an ethical obligation **not** to side with one family or one religious perspective or one child over another. But children absolutely need a chance -- at home -- to explore feelings and beliefs with adults they love, just as they need a chance to learn factual information and to have universal, community values reinforced at school.

However, just because it's inappropriate in a public school setting to teach **particular values** on controversial issues, that does **not** mean one can't teach **about** the issues. It just means that it must be done with respect for the diversity of opinion within your community. For example, you can discuss abortion - what it is, the fact that it is legal in this country, where abortions are performed, etc., but it is not appropriate to share your beliefs about whether or not abortion is a correct choice.

Therefore, when answering a value question you should follow the **F.L.A.S.H.** values question protocol.

Values Question Protocol:

1. Read the question (verbatim, if you can) or listen to it carefully.
2. Legitimize the question.
3. Identify it as a belief question.
4. Answer the factual part, if there is one.
5. Help the class describe the community's range of beliefs.
6. Refer to family, clergy, and other trusted adults.
7. Check to see if you answered the question.
8. Leave the door open.

SAMPLE Q: I masturbate. Is that ok?

SAMPLE A: That's a great question, a lot of kids wonder about masturbation. Masturbation is when a person strokes or touches their genitals for pleasure. I can't share my own beliefs about whether or not it's ok to masturbate because families have really different beliefs about masturbation. Some families believe it's ok, as long as you're in a private place. Other families believe it's never ok. You need to check with your families, or another trusted adult to find out how they feel about it. If that's not what you meant, feel free to leave another question in the box or you can talk to me after class.

You will eventually tailor your use of the protocol, only using **every** step the first time masturbation, for example, comes up. For now, you should practice the protocol step by step -- until it becomes a natural part of your teaching.

Values Question Protocol in more detail:

1. Read the question:

Read it verbatim, if you can. Use your judgment, of course, but even reading aloud relatively crude language -- as long as you do it with a serious tone and facial expression -- conveys your respect for the child who asked the question. It is likely to promote respect in return. If the language is too crude to repeat, even with a red face and an explanation ("*Someone used slang, but let me read it for you as they wrote it before I translate it.*"), then don't read it directly. But when you paraphrase it, make sure you are clear enough that the author of the question will recognize it as his or hers.

2. Legitimize the question:

"I am glad someone asked this one."

"That's an interesting question."

"People ask me this one every year."

"This one is really thoughtful (compassionate, imaginative, respectful)."

This will encourage your students to keep asking even as it discourages snide remarks about whoever asked that particular question.

3. Identify it as a belief question:

"Most of the questions you've been asking have been "fact questions" where I could look up an answer that all the experts agree upon. This one is more of a "value question" where every person, every family, every religion has a different belief."

Teaching your students to distinguish facts from opinions (and from feelings) is at least as important as any content you will convey.

4. Answer the factual part, if there is one:

Thus, for instance, if the question is about the rightness or wrongness of masturbation, you need to make sure that your class understands that -- values notwithstanding -- no physical harm results from masturbating:

"Before we get to differing beliefs about masturbation, let me just make sure you know it doesn't cause people to go blind or mentally ill or to grow hair on their palms or anything like that."

Even questions that are fact questions on their face may need a discussion of the underlying values, but always start by answering them:

"Can you get birth control without your boyfriend or husband's knowing? Yes, legally in our state, you can. Now let's talk about the different beliefs people might have about couple's communicating about birth control."

5. Help the class describe the community's range of beliefs, not their own.

On sensitive issues such as sex and religion, it can be really unfair (and, in Washington State, illegal) to ask individual students their own beliefs. But it is very appropriate to generalize:

"Tell me some of the things you've heard that people believe about that."

Prompt the group with a stem sentence:

"Some people believe ___?"

"Um, hmm, and some people believe ___?"

In a class that is used to thinking about the range of community values, you will be able to draw a full assortment of answers from the students. In other groups, especially younger ones, you may draw only a dichotomy ("*Some people believe abortion is wrong.*" and "*Some people believe it is right.*") In any case, your role is two-fold: (1) to make sure that every belief gets expressed -- or paraphrased -- respectfully, hopefully just as the person who

believed it might express it and (2) to make sure that a complete range of beliefs gets expressed, even if you have to supplement the few values the group can think of:

"That's right, some people believe that it is wrong under any circumstances. And some believe it is right under any circumstances, as long as the woman and her doctor think it's best. Some believe it is OK to have an abortion if you have been raped or if your life is in danger, but not otherwise. Some believe, it is OK to have an abortion if there's something seriously wrong with the fetus, and it is doomed to a life of pain. Some think it is best for teens to have abortions, rather than to raise babies when they are still growing up themselves. Others disagree. Some feel it is better to have an abortion if you already have as many children as you can afford or take proper care of. Again, others disagree. They may feel that abortion is the same as murder. Whereas, some people think it is not really a separate human being with rights until it is developed enough to have feelings or until it is actually born."

6. Refer to family, clergy and other trusted adults.

"Because people have such different beliefs about this, I really want to encourage you to talk with your families -- your parent or guardian, grandparent, auntie, uncle, stepparent, mom's or dad's partner -- or with somebody at your community of worship, if you attend a church or synagogue or temple -- or with some other adult you love and whose opinions matter to you. That could be your babysitter, your best friend's parent, a counselor, or whoever will listen to your opinions and honestly share theirs. Have a conversation within the next week if you can."

Notice that this encouragement didn't assume that every child has a parent they can talk with. Some may have only been newly in a new foster home and don't yet have that kind of relationship with their new "parents." Also, notice that we shouldn't assume that every child goes to church.

What if the family is likely to convey values that the child will feel hurt by (a teen who has come out to you as gay, for instance, but whose family is strongly opposed to homosexuality)? Still, knowing one's family's beliefs is developmentally important for young people. But help them think of other trusted adults, as well.

7. Check to see if you answered the question.

"Is that what you were asking?"

"Do you all think that was what the person who wrote this question was asking?"

8. Leave the door open.

"If that isn't what you really wanted to know, you can drop another question in the box. Or come talk with me in private. You can also get a friend to ask it aloud for you or to explain to me what you meant. Just keep asking until I understand and tell you what you need to know."

Finally, if you can do it sincerely, thank the class -- or in a one-on-one situation, the student -- for their maturity or curiosity or compassion or whatever positive qualities the Q & A session has helped them to demonstrate. That will not only increase their retention, it will improve the odds of their repeating the positive behavior on the next occasion.