

## Curriculum Philosophy

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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 supplement 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.

What are the more **controversial areas**, where teachers should never teach particular belief positions? Some are ... **masturbation, abortion, homosexual behavior, other sexual touch, besides vaginal intercourse (e.g., anal, oral intercourse), non-marital sex, and contraception.**

Expressing any particular belief about these topics would surely offend the families of some of your students. So, how should a teacher handle these issues? Ignore them? **NO!** That's like saying you shouldn't teach about the political party system, for fear you'll teach that a particular party is best. The proper role of the teacher is addressed below.

## Preparing to Teach 11/12 F.L.A.S.H.

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**This notebook is strictly a supplement.**

Unlike the younger grade levels of the **Family Life And Sexual Health (FLASH)** curriculum, **11/12 FLASH** is not self-contained and is not meant to stand alone. It is intended to supplement **9/10 FLASH**. Many of the lessons contained in this notebook presume the prerequisite knowledge of certain **9/10 FLASH** material.

Thus, in schools where students study sexuality in their Freshman or Sophomore year and again in their Junior or Senior year, use a quick pretest, to make sure they've retained most of the **9/10** content, and a climate-setting lesson such as the first lesson in **9/10 FLASH**. Then follow simply with the 19 lessons (approximately four to six weeks' worth) contained in this notebook.

However, as this goes to print, most schools still offer sexuality education only once during four years of high school. If that one time occurs in the Freshman or Sophomore year, we recommend using the 30 lessons contained in **9/10 FLASH**. This will take six or eight weeks. If, on the other hand, Juniors and Seniors have their first and only high-school level opportunity to study sexuality, we recommend combining most or all of the **9/10 FLASH** lessons, with the lessons you will find in this notebook, for a total of 49 lessons. This will take about ten to fourteen weeks. You will find a sample agenda for such a combination unit on pages 14-16 of this notebook.

## Preparing To Teach 11/12 F.L.A.S.H.

### 1. Know Your State and Local Guidelines

It is imperative, morally and legally, that you follow the guidelines established by the State Legislature, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (or, in states other than Washington, your states Department of Education), and your district's elected School Board. (For the complete text of the Washington State Superintendent's Guidelines, with excerpts from the law, see Appendices C and D.)

Essentially, with the exception of HIV/AIDS, Washington State leaves the decision about whether to provide sexuality education up to the local school board. The State does, however,

make recommendations for districts that do teach it, about how it should be taught. It says, for example, that “major emphasis ... should be to assist the adults in the home ...” and that “sexuality is an integral part of a total personality and to consider sex as purely physical is to give it an unrealistic emphasis.” The State also requires that parents have the option of excusing their child from the sexuality unit.

With regard to HIV/AIDS education, the State goes further. It requires that every child in grades five through twelve receive HIV/AIDS education on an annual basis. Any materials used in the public schools must go through not only the usual district-level review process, but also a review by the Department of Health for medical accuracy, and a review by the State Superintendent’s office, for educational soundness. The latter is simply for rating purposes, whereas the DOH review is for approval. The State further requires that HIV/AIDS lessons emphasize that abstaining from sexual intercourse and from needle-sharing are the only two guarantees of protection from HIV. The curriculum must state that condoms reduce, but do not eliminate, risk.

Unless you know that your district has already approved **11/12 FLASH**, contact your curriculum office as far in advance as possible, to find out your local policies.

## 2. Prepare Yourself

Review this entire curriculum before teaching any part of it.

Journals that address sexuality education include: *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, the *Journal of School Health*, and the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. And, specifically for teachers, we highly recommend *Teaching Tolerance* magazine and *Sex Etc.* magazine and its teacher companion guide, *Teaching with Sex, Etc.: Articles & Activities*.

## 3. Prepare Your Administrator

Discuss the course’s content, materials and activities with your building administrator. A principal needs to know of guest speakers. He or she should also see the letter you plan to send to parents and guardians, offering to excuse their children. The importance of involving your administrator from the outset cannot be overemphasized. Your principal must be informed about the unit, in order to respond to parents’ questions and concerns.

## 4. Prepare Parents

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. They may or may not be knowledgeable about the facts. But only they can share their beliefs and feelings with their children.

Your role with respect to parents is two-fold. First, legally and morally, you must inform parents that you are about to begin the unit. Your job is to offer them the options of previewing materials and/or excusing their son or daughter. Second, for those students who do participate (about 95-99% of all students), you can use the unit to foster better communication at home. That is why we have provided Family/Friend Homework Exercises in many lessons. If you use these Homework Exercises, follow these guidelines:

- a) Explain that the student can do the assignment with any trusted adult in the family (parent, stepparent, grandparent, group home parent, Mom's boyfriend, etc.) or with a close friend. (At the younger grade levels, we confined these assignments to the family; juniors and seniors, however, have begun to build trusted friendships, as well.)
- b) Never ask students to report on the content of those conversations, only that they did talk. To ask about a student's or family's "beliefs or practices ... as to sex" would violate the Washington State Board of Education's Guidelines and, even if you teach outside Washington, is questionable practice, needing to be done with great care so as not to force a student with a minority viewpoint – or a student whose family has a minority viewpoint -- to defend him/herself to peers. Besides, the point of these activities is to foster communication, not shut it down, which reporting on content might do. And besides, it's critical that you avoid even the appearance that you might be grading on the basis of students' constitutionally protected right to believe as they do.. Thus, all a student turns in to you for credit is a Family/Friend Homework Confirmation Slip.

## Before You Begin

### 1. Arrange for guest speakers and panels.

Speakers and panels can be very valuable, not only to the novice sexuality educator, but in every classroom. They can bring special life experience or expertise as they provide a change of pace. Nonetheless, an individual's affiliation or credential does not ensure his or her ability to communicate well with young people. Ideally, you will invite as guests only people you have observed in the classroom before. That is, of course, not always possible. At a minimum, always talk with speakers in advance to:

- make sure they understand your objectives and expectations and vice versa,
- make clear that all handouts they wish to provide must be approved in advance,
- find out their audio-visual equipment needs (if applicable), and
- be sure they know when and where to arrive.

Make sure the presence of speakers is consistent with your district's policies. And stay in the classroom. In Washington State (and most other states) the law requires that a certificated person be present at all times. Besides, you can't do an adequate job of integrating the lesson with the rest of your curriculum and/or following up on concerns that don't get addressed, unless you have heard what the speaker and students have said.

**In lessons 5, 6, 7, 11 and 15, we have urged you to consider inviting panels of guest speakers.** (We have also suggested alternatives to a panel, in case it isn't feasible to invite one.) See those lessons — at least a month in advance of each — for specific suggestions and guidelines.

### 2. Assemble materials.

- PHOTOCOPIES

Every lesson plan contains material to be copied. We realize that the quantity of material to be copied is daunting. However, lacking funding in most school districts

for a sexuality text book, we could see no alternative to this process. Give yourself (and a Teaching Assistant, ideally) plenty of time for copying and collating handouts and transparencies.

- INDEX CARDS

Lessons 11, 12 and 16 all require index cards (or 3X5" scrap paper) ... one per student.

- VIDEOS

We have recommended (optionally) a DVD for use in lessons 5 & 10. See the lesson — at least a month in advance — for ordering information.

- OTHER VISUAL AIDS

Some lessons rely upon “props”, specifically:

**Lesson 5:** 30 pairs of left-handed scissors (optional)

**Lesson 7:** library paste, hand lotion, and either a raw egg or a tube of vaginal lubricant (e.g., “Astroglide, “K-Y Jelly,” “Slippery Stuff”)

**Lesson 13:** condom, dental dam, syringe

**Lesson 18:** multiple props, see lesson at least a week in advance

**Lesson 19:** multiple props, see lesson at least a week in advance

**3. Meet with any students who have been “excused” from the unit (and 18-year-olds who may have excused themselves).**

We recommend that you spend a few minutes with any individuals whose participation in the unit has been waived ... giving them instructions for their alternative projects in the library.

**4. Pretest the class to assess which areas need review (using 9/10 FLASH).**

While you meet with these students, you may want to have the rest of the class pretest themselves, in one of two ways:

- If your students have never studied **9/10 FLASH**, use the pretest from that notebook (pages 9-15).
- If they have been exposed to this content previously, you can instead use the pretests from this curriculum notebook. Unlike **9/10 FLASH**, **11/12 FLASH** has no overall unit pretest. There are four topical pretests, which test for prerequisite knowledge for the lessons on fertility, contraception, love (the pretest for “love” concerns distinguishing consent from exploitation), and HIV/AIDS. You will find them in the lessons on those topics: 6, 7, 12, and 13.

You can also wait, and administer each topical pretest as you come to the relevant lesson. The advantage of testing now is that it allows you to determine on which topics your students need 9/10 remediation. It also helps students recognize the limitations of their own sexuality knowledge. Testing later, topic by topic, however, will avoid overwhelming students on the first day of the unit. Use your judgment about which will work better for you. Pretesting will take most groups 25 or 30 minutes.

## 5. Establish a trusting, respectful climate and expectations.

It is crucial to provide at least one climate-setting, expectation-clarifying lesson, preceding the use of these **11/12 FLASH** lessons ... even with groups who've studied **9/10 FLASH** in a previous year.

The first lesson of a sexuality unit has four goals:

- TO PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW, a beginning structure on which to hang this new body of knowledge;
- TO EXPRESS YOUR ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDENTS, regarding such matters as homework (individual and family/friend assignments), individual field trip reports, and class participation;
- TO COMMUNICATE WHAT STUDENTS CAN EXPECT FROM YOU, for instance, that you will
  - treat them with respect and kindness,
  - be reasonably comfortable, but also human (i.e., occasionally awkward),
  - take the subject seriously, but with fascination, rather than clinical dryness,
  - protect their privacy (to the extent you legally can), your own privacy, and that of others,
  - answer all questions to the very best of your ability, and
  - be knowledgeable, but also honest about the limits of your expertise;
- TO COMMUNICATE WHAT STUDENTS CAN EXPECT FROM THEMSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER, for instance, that they will
  - treat one another with respect and kindness,
  - become more comfortable discussing the subject,
  - take the subject seriously, with maturity, though perhaps not altogether without humor,
  - protect their own privacy, one another's', and that of other people,
  - learn a lot of new information, and
  - enjoy the unit!

To accomplish these goals, we recommend the first lesson or two of **9/10 FLASH**, or the equivalent, for climate-setting, whether or not you plan to use all of **9/10 FLASH**.

## 6. Assign Individual Field Trip Reports.

Some of you are combining **9/10** and **11/12 FLASH**, and planning to assign “Individual Field Trips”, as recommended in **9/10 FLASH**. This will give students the opportunity to rehearse the skill of accessing resources. Their oral reports can also provide the rest of the class with information about a wide variety of agencies, physicians, and communities of worship ... along with a peer’s perspective on the attitudes and procedures a teen can expect to find at each community resource.

You will need the Field Trip Instructions and Sign-up Sheet on pages 16-20 and 22-23 of **9/10 FLASH** and also the supplementary Field Trip Instructions and Sign-up Sheet starting on page xviii of this notebook. Oral Field Trip Reports are suggested parts of lessons 7, 11 and 15 of this Curriculum Supplement (**11/12 FLASH**), as well as lessons 2, 5, 10, 13, 18, 19, and 23 of **9/10 FLASH**.

If you assign Individual (or Two-person) Field Trips, allow time to discuss “guidelines” for these field trips. Students should:

- Expect at least two weeks’ delay from their initial phone call to a resource person, until that person is available to spend time being interviewed by the student.
- Plan to persist, in case one resource person is rude or simply unavailable.
- Explain in their initial phone contact that they need fifteen to thirty minutes of the resource person’s time to interview them for a school project.
- Interview the resource person face-to-face, if at all possible. Obtain a pamphlet, business card, poster or other proof of the visit. The “Field Trip” can be conducted over the phone, if the student lacks transportation, but this is less than ideal. If the student does a telephone Field Trip, he or she should ask the resource person to mail him/her some literature or a business card, as proof of the interview.
- Send a thank you note after the interview.

Be aware that Individual Field Trips are sometimes an emotionally challenging experience. Be prepared to spend time one-on-one with students, referring them to your school counselor or nurse, to their families and clergy, and to other youth-serving agencies, as needed.

## Sample Unit Agenda

For a 12-week **FLASH** Unit in a 20-week Senior Health course

Week/Day	Topic	Sub-Topic	Lesson Number		
			9/10 FLASH	11/12 FLASH	
1.	M:	Unit introduction:	including Unit or Topic Pre-tests	1	
	T:	Touch and Abstinence		2	
	W:	Critical Thinking			1
	Th:	Reproductive System		3	
	F:	Puberty and Adolescence:	Overview	4	
2.	M:	Child and Adolescent (C&A) Sexual Development:	Infancy and Preschool		2
	T:	C&A Sexual Development:	Gender Roles		3
	W:	Puberty and Adolescence:	Who Am I? Where Am I Going?	5	
	Th:	Puberty and Adolescence:	Am I Normal?	6	
	F:	Puberty and Adolescence:	Will I Fit In?	7	
3.	M:	Puberty and Adolescence:	What Will I Decide About Touch?	8	
	T:	C&A Sexual Development:	Gender Orientation and the Individual		4
	W:	C&A Sexual Development:	Gender Orientation and Society		5
	Th:	panel 1 *			
	F:	<i>Individual Field Trip</i> prep time			
4.	M:	Sexual Exploitation:	Communication	9	
	T:	Sexual Exploitation:	Consent vs. Exploitation	10	
	W:	Sexual Exploitation:	Continuum of Sexual Touch	11	
	Th:	Sexual Exploitation:	Assault Strategies	12	
	F:	<i>Individual Field Trip Reports and video ... review, discussion, unfinished business</i>			
5.	M:	C&A Sexual Development:	Learning to Love		6
	T:	... lesson continued	"		6
	W:	panel 2 **			
	Th:	Pregnancy:	The Developing Baby	13	
	F:	Pregnancy:	The Experience	14	

\* In this class, panel 1 consisted of three young people who identify as "gay, lesbian, or bisexual" and the parent of a fourth young person.

\*\* Panel 2 consisted of three couples in their early twenties, each of whom had been together for over a year. One couple is in treatment for domestic violence.



Week/Day	Topic	Sub-Topic	Lesson Number		
			9/10 FLASH	11/12 FLASH	
6.	M:	Pregnancy:	Prenatal Health	15	
	T:	Fertility and Infertility:	Fertility and Infertility		7
	W:	...lesson continued	"		7
	Th:	<i>panel 3 * and one Individual Field Trip Report</i>			
	F:	Planning to Parent:	Infant Health	16	
7.	M:	Planning to Parent:	Do I Want Children? How Many? When?	17	
	T:	Planning to Parent:	Am I Qualified?	18	
	W:	Unplanned Pregnancy:	Friends and Family	19	
	Th:	Unplanned Pregnancy:	Abortion		8
	F:	Unplanned Pregnancy:	Adoption		9
8.	M:	Unplanned Pregnancy:	Parenting, Focus on Fathering		10 (p. 199)
	T:	...lesson continued	"		10 cont.
	W:	Unplanned Pregnancy	Pregnancy Options and Society		11 (p. 215)
	Th:	<i>Individual Field Trip Reports ... review, discussion, unfinished business</i>			
	F:	panel 4 **			
9.	M:	Contraception:	Overview	20 (p. 365)	
	T:	Contraception:	A Closer Look	21 (p. 397)	
	W:	Contraception:	What's the Best Method?	22 (p. 409)	
	Th:	Contraception:	Communication	23 (p. 417)	
	F:	<i>Individual Field Trip Reports ... review, discussion, unfinished business</i>			
10.	M:	Contraception:	Contraception, Individuals and Society		12
	T:	Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs):	Overview	24 (p. 433)	
	W:	HIV/AIDS:	Update on HIV		13
	Th:	HIV/AIDS:	Focus on Testing		14
	F:	HIV/AIDS: <i>Individual Field Trip Reports</i>	HIV/AIDS, Friends and Families		15

\* *Panel 3 consisted of three couples, all of whom had faced infertility. One couple had resolved it via donor insemination; one, via surgical treatment; the third, via deciding to remain child-free.*

\*\* *Panel 4 consisted of three people at peace with their three different decisions in their unplanned pregnancies: abortion, adoption and parenting.*

Week/Day		Topic	Sub-Topic	Lesson Number	
				9/10 FLASH	11/12 FLASH
11.	M:	HIV/AIDS:	HIV/AIDS and Society		16
	T:	STDs:	Epidemiology	27 *	
	W:	STDs:	STDs and Communication	28	
	Th:	Sexual Health Care	Pelvic, Breast and Testicular Exams	29	
	F:	The Sexual Response System			17
12.	M:	Abstinence, Attitude & Activism			18
	T:	Lifelong Sexuality			19
	W:	<i>Make-up day for Individual Field Trip Reports, unfinished business, concerns, review</i>			
	Th:	<i>Post-test**</i>			
	F:	SCHOOL HOLIDAY!			

\* Note that the 9/10 FLASH lessons on HIV/AIDS (lessons 25 and 26) were omitted; the 11 / 12 FLASH lessons were used in their place. In this district, although most of “Human Sexuality” is covered in Health, in the Senior year, the 9/10 FLASH HIV/AIDS lessons are used in Freshman Science. Thus, it is important to avoid repeating identical material, visuals, etc.

\*\* The Post-test can be found in Lesson 19. In this class, it was administered on a separate day, to allow plenty of discussion time during the lesson itself.

## Values Questions & Protocol

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As we said in the curriculum philosophy section, 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.

Because the very teaching of certain topics may be controversial in some communities, we have included sections called "Rationale" after the cover pages of some lessons (4, 7, 8, 17). These sections explain and document the relevance and vital importance of those sections of the curriculum to the lives of juniors and seniors in high school.

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.

## Other Difficult Questions

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Besides value-laden questions, teachers may find a number of other questions challenging, including those which contain **slang**, those which are **hurtful**, those which are **personal** (about the teacher or about a member of the class), those for which the **teacher doesn't know** the answer and, especially with written anonymous questions, those where the **teacher simply can't decipher** what the student meant by the question. Let's address these one at a time, with strategies for your "toolbox" rather than a single protocol. However, don't let these questions intimidate you. The vast majority will be straightforward fact questions, most of which you will know the answer to.

### Slang Question Strategies

1. **Trust your professional judgment** and personal comfort as guides for which of these strategies to utilize in any given situation.
2. **Assume good intentions ... or act as if you do.** We've found that students work hard to live up to your expectations if you work to convey (even when you may be frankly, skeptical) a faith in their best intentions for asking a question. Use your tone to convey respect for the person who asked the question, even as you address the slang in it.
3. **Acknowledge that it may not have been written as a serious question.** When a question is just too off-the-wall to have been asked for any other reason than to have gotten a laugh or put you on the spot, it's okay to preface your reading it aloud with *"Maybe the person who wrote this wasn't serious about it, but I'm going to answer it anyway, in case they really did need an answer or in case someone else in the class does."*
4. **Read the question verbatim** if you can. The advantages of reading the question verbatim, if at all possible (given boundaries of one's own discretion and comfort) include:
  - a. Not confusing the author of the question
  - b. Communicating your respect for the students; your trust in their sincerity and maturity
  - c. Communicating that you are relatively unflappable and accepting
  - d. Diffusing the need to test
5. **Own your discomfort with the language and paraphrase it.** Rather than taking a punitive, or annoyed, or rule-based stance, try saying something like, *"I'm not comfortable reading this one the way it was written, but it may be an important question, so let me paraphrase it for you. The person used slang, but what I think they were asking was ..."*
6. **Identify the slang** as such (e.g., *"Cherry is a slang word."*).
7. **Distinguish between neutral and demeaning slang.** Not all slang is hurtful. *Period*, for example, is slang for menstruation, but it's just as respectful as its medical counterpart. In contrast, *faggot* is hurtful and the person asking the question probably knows it. Refer to the "Hurtful question strategies" below for ideas for managing slang when it is derogatory.
8. **Translate into medical/standard language.** Write the medical/standard or respectful/sensitive term on the board, to reinforce it.

9. **Answer the question.** If it's also a value question (for example, "Is it ok to *jack off*?"), use the value question protocol.
10. **Leave the door open.** Because slang and euphemisms can be ambiguous or can mean different things to one generation or culture than they mean to another, you may have misinterpreted what the student was asking. Acknowledge that and invite the author to drop another question in the box or to talk with you in private if you haven't answered what they meant to ask.

#### Example of a slang question:

**Q:** How does a dick get big?

**A:** A lot of people wonder that. *Dick* is a slang term for *penis* (write "penis" on the board). The penis is full of blood vessels and veins. When the blood vessels and veins fill with blood, the penis gets harder and larger. That's called an erection. Another way a penis gets bigger is by slowly growing bigger as a boy's body grows to the size of a man's body. I hope I answered the question -- if I didn't, please let me know or put another question in the box.

#### Example of a slang question that's also about a controversial value:

**Q:** What if you're a boy and you really like boys, does that make you a faggot?

**A:** That's a really interesting question. First, "*faggot*" is a put-down word for a gay man. It's sometimes used to insult a man – whether he's gay or straight -- who isn't as masculine as someone thinks a guy should be. Anyway, in more respectful language, the question was: "*Does it mean you're gay if you really like other boys?*" Not necessarily. A guy can have close guy friends without being gay. If he finds that most of his serious crushes are on other guys – the kind where your stomach flips when the person walks into the room and you totally want them to notice you – then, yes, maybe he is gay. But it takes time to know that about yourself; *one* crush doesn't predict one way or another whether he's gay. Different families, cultures, and religious traditions have widely varying beliefs about homosexuality. Some people believe that it doesn't matter whether you're gay or straight – that whether you're a good person has nothing to do with who you like. Other people believe that it matters a lot. They may think that, no matter who he's attracted to, a guy should only have relationships with women. Because people have such different beliefs about it, it would be great if you would try to discuss it with your families. Nevertheless, whatever you believe, it's never acceptable to hurt or tease people. From now on, I'd appreciate in our class if people would use the word *gay*, rather than insults like *faggot*.

### Hurtful Question Strategies

1. **If the underlying assumptions or premises of the question are derogatory or hurtful, say so.** Identify stereotypes. Help students recognize (and name) sexism, racism, etc. When students use the term "*Siamese twins*" I explain that blaming a birth anomaly on one country is racist. Siam is the country we now call "*Thailand*." And just because the most famous *conjoined* twins were Thai, it doesn't make it OK to name the problem after the country where they were born.
2. **Let the author off the hook** with "*The person may not have meant this as hurtful, but ...*" Not all hurt is intentional. It's always a good idea, when in doubt, to be generous in your assumptions. When students use the term "*Siamese twins*" I always note that that's probably what the person who wrote the question has **always** heard them called, but ..."



3. When demeaning slang is part of the question, **translate into "more respectful/sensitive"** language. Write the respectful/sensitive term on the board, to reinforce it. Tell them, not in an angry way but in a teaching sense, which language you want them to use from now on.
4. **Skip written questions altogether if a classmate is identified by name.** Naming a classmate in a question in order to humiliate them is not OK. Those are the only questions I will refuse to read aloud. See "Personal Question Strategies," below for more ideas about that.
5. **Answer the question.** I was once asked in a middle school whether African-American men are hornier than Caucasian men. First, I identified that as a stereotype. But then I made sure to answer the question in as straightforward a way as possible so there would be no mistaking my answer: *"No, African-American men are as diverse in their sexual desire as men of other racial identities. Some like a lot of sex; some don't want as much. And it changes at different times in each guy's life. For that matter, the same is true for women."*

## Personal Question Strategies

Whether to self-disclose is a decision that must be based on both professional judgment and personal comfort. You might feel comfortable disclosing that, for example, you have never had an abortion. But if the next day you decline to disclose, for example, whether or not you have ever masturbated, your students may interpret your refusal to answer as a "yes." It's usually most appropriate **NOT** to self-disclose information about your sexual or medical history. On the other hand, questions about your family, your identity, and your own sexuality education may be fine to answer. It makes you human and story-telling – about yourself and people you know -- can be a useful and appropriate teaching strategy, as long as it doesn't step over a line.

In contrast, when a question is a personal one about some *other* specific individual (another student in the class, another staff member, or a student's friend or family member), it is your job not to violate that person's confidentiality.

Thus, options include:

1. **Decline to self-disclose and explain why.** But do it in a way that doesn't imply ill-will on the part of the student who asked the question. Simply model good boundaries: *"I'm not comfortable answering this one. It's a personal question."* Or *"I really like y'all, but you're my students, not my close friends. This question feels too personal for me to get into with you."*
2. **Paraphrase the question so that it isn't about you or anyone specific** in the class or elsewhere. So instead of reading verbatim a question that is clearly intended to embarrass a classmate, like, *"Is Johnny Jones [a classmate] going through puberty?"* you could say, *"This person wants to know how you could tell if someone is going through puberty."*
3. **Generalize.** Speak of what *people* do, instead of what *you* have done. Often a student asking personal question about you is simply looking for validation. It can be even more validating to say, *"This person asked whether I personally have had an abortion. I don't want to talk about my own personal history with you. You are my class. You're a great class, but I don't talk about this kind of thing with anyone but my closest friends. What I can say is that about 3 in 10 people who get pregnant as teens have abortions; the other 7 carry the pregnancy to term."*

Example of a personal question (that's also a value question):

**Q: How old were you when you first had sex?**

**A:** I know a lot of kids wonder about decisions adults have made, but I'm not comfortable answering a personal question like this one except with my closest friends. Remember our ground rule about protecting privacy? I'm going to protect mine on this issue. But maybe this person is asking when people generally start having sex ... kind of 'What's normal?'. The answer is: it varies, of course, from one culture and one generation to the next. One recent national survey found that 46.8% -- less than half -- of high school students in the U.S. had ever had sexual intercourse. But the truth is, I hope you won't base **your** decisions on what other people have done. The decision about when to have sex for the first time is too important to base it on other people's choices. *[Then use the value question protocol ...]* Each person, each family and religious tradition and culture have really different beliefs about when it should happen. Some people believe a person shouldn't have sex until they are married. Others believe that if you're an adult and are done with school that it's OK. Some believe there are certain qualities in a relationship or certain kinds of maturity that ought to happen first, no matter how old you are. Because people have such different beliefs about this one, I hope you'll talk with your families and other trusted adults *[and with high school students add: and your closest friends and people you go out with]* to see what they believe.

## Strategies for the Question You Don't Know the Answer To

It's important to acknowledge your limits. The "admission" you don't know is not a failure but a vital opportunity to model that even expert adults (teachers, doctors, journalists, etc.) don't know all there is to know about human sexuality. It gives students permission not to know everything either. Even those whose social stature rests on knowing all about sex. Again, there are several ways you can answer this type of question. You can:

1. **Be honest.** Don't just guess at the answer. Or if you can make an *educated* guess, do ... but be very clear that that's what you're doing.
2. **Ask if anyone in the class knows the answer.** Often someone will. And utilizing their knowledge is empowering to them as learners.
3. **Look it up in front of them.** The skill of accessing reliable health information is even more crucial than the answer itself.
4. **Promise to find out** and get back to them. If you do make this kind of promise, be sure to follow through. And when you do, **make sure to tell them how/where you found out.**
5. **Get a volunteer to research it and report back.** Provide some guidance about where the volunteer might go for a trustworthy answer, and consider offering extra credit.

An example of a question you might not know the answer to:

**Q: What causes PMS?**

**A:** That's a great question, but I'm not sure I know the answer. PMS stands for premenstrual syndrome. It's the word for the symptoms some women feel before they get their periods - like being moody or sad. But I'm not sure what causes it. Does anyone in class know the answer? Would someone be willing to do some research on PMS for extra credit? I can give you some ideas about where to go to find out.

## Strategies for the Question You Don't Understand

You have several options for these types of questions.

1. **Take responsibility for not understanding** (as opposed to blaming the author of the question). So say something like, "*This may be a very important question, but I'm not sure what the person is asking.*" instead of, "*Well, there are a lot of misspellings and mangled grammar here.*"
2. If it is asked verbally, **probe a little**. "*Can you say more about what you're asking?*"
3. Read it verbatim or write a word you don't recognize on the board. And **ask if anyone in the class knows what the person might have meant**.
4. If it's asked in writing, **guess at the author's intended question** and answer it. You may need to answer more than one possible question.
5. **Invite the author to drop another question in the question box**, rephrasing what the question meant.

Example of a question you don't understand (from a middle school ESL class):

**Q: If you got zix do you fell sick?**

**A:** I'm not sure I understand this student's question -- I'm not always up-to-date on words students like to use! Does anyone know what this student might have meant? No? OK, I'll guess at what they might have meant. There are some illnesses that people can get where they don't feel sick. Some sexually transmitted diseases are that way -- you might have one and not feel sick at all. If a person is having sex, they should get checked for sexually transmitted diseases at a clinic, even if they don't feel sick. I hope I answered this question -- if I didn't, I hope whoever wrote it will try to reword it and put it in the box again.

# Field Trip Report Instructions

Supplementary to those in *9/10 FLASH* \*

Topics and Field Trip Sites		Questions to Answer:	
11.	<p>“Infertility”</p> <p>a clinic that specializes in infertility, a support organization such as “RESOLVE”, or a person or couple who is (or was) infertile</p>	11.	<p>a. What’s the most important thing for the community to know about people who are infertile? What is the most harmful myth or stereotype about them?</p>
			<p>b. What is it like to be infertile? How is it different for a man and a woman?</p>
	<p>Due: _____</p>		<p>c. Is there anything about infertility that you wish you had known as a teen? What?</p>
12.	<p>“Three Pregnancy Options ... PRO”</p> <p>three persons or couples: one who had an abortion, one who placed a baby for adoption, and one who kept and is raising a baby that was not planned ... all these people should have made their decisions at least four years ago, and all should be people who feel they made the best decision (for them, at that time)</p>	12.	<p>a. What was it like making your choice about the pregnancy? Why did you make the choice you made?</p>
			<p>b. What’s the most harmful myth or stereotype about people who make the choice you made? What’s more true?</p>
	<p>Due: _____</p>		<p>c. What could a friend or family member have done to help, at the time and in the year afterwards?</p>

13.	<p>“One Pregnancy Option ... PRO and CON”</p> <p>two persons or couples, both of whom chose the same unplanned pregnancy option (abortion, adoption, or parenting) ... one person or couple who feel troubled by the choice they made and one who is/are at peace with their decision</p>	13.	a.	<p>same questions as for Field Trip #12 (above)</p>
	<p>Also due: _____</p>			

NOTE: For help finding people willing to be interviewed for Field Trips 12 and 13, try adoption agencies, family planning programs, and or OB/GYN doctors. Your teacher may be able to help in the search.

14.	<p>“HIV/AIDS”</p> <p>a clinic or social service agency that serves people with HIV (people who are HIV positive) or who actually have AIDS, or a person with HIV/AIDS, or his or her family member or close friend, or other care-giver.</p>	14.	a.	<p>What’s the most important thing for the community to know about people with HIV or AIDS? What’s the most harmful myth or stereotype about them?</p>
			b.	<p>What is the hardest part about being HIV-positive or of having AIDS?</p>
	<p>Due: _____</p>		c.	<p>What is it like being (or working with, or loving) a person with HIV?</p>

# Field Trip Sign-Up Sheet

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Supplementary to that in **9/10 FLASH** \*

NOTE: *Please do not add any lines. The number of lines below each topic is the maximum who can research that topic ... that way we will have variety in our reports. Thanks.*

## 11. INFERTILITY

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## 12. THREE PREGNANCY OPTIONS, PRO

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## 13. ONE PREGNANCY OPTION, PRO AND CON

*Which option will you study?*

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## 14. HIV/AIDS

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\* see pages 1-22 and 1-23 of **9/10 FLASH**