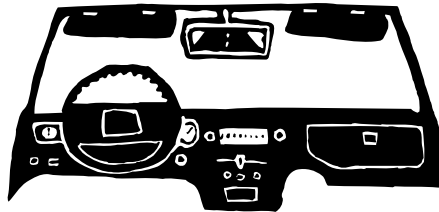


# Section VIII: Driving Home Your Points



Now that you've learned about sexuality education, talked to parents and members of your community, contacted the media and begun talking to school board members, you're ready to start answering their arguments.

This section of the kit gives you the tools you need to respond to concerns about and objections to your proposals.

## Contents:

- **They Say... You Say: Answers to Frequently Argued Myths**
- **Tips for Public Speaking**
- **Sample Position Paper**

### They Say... You Say: Answers to Frequently Argued Myths

**MYTH:** Talking about contraception with young people sends the message that you think it's OK if they have sex.

**TRUTH:** Giving young people information sends the message that you care about them and want them to make educated and responsible decisions. Not

giving them information leaves them without the tools to make good decisions and sends the message that you don't care what they do.

**MYTH:** Sex before marriage is psychologically harmful.

**TRUTH:** There is no evidence to support this. Sexual relationships that are coercive, exploitive, unprotected and without respect and trust are psychologically harmful, and they happen between people who are married and unmarried. Comprehensive sexuality education gives young people the skills to stay out of these kinds of harmful relationships and/or helps them recognize and end unhealthy relationships in which they are involved.

**MYTH:** Sexuality education that starts in high school is adequate — younger children do not need information about sexuality.

**TRUTH:** Children are interested and curious about issues related to sexuality starting at very young ages. Refusing to give them good, factual answers to their questions and denying them opportunities to learn about this subject sends a message that sex is bad and

that they are somehow bad to want to know about it. We provide foundations for all other subjects — math, science, history — starting in kindergarten. For sexuality education to be beneficial, it needs to begin with age-appropriate lessons for young children and build on itself over time.

**MYTH:** Comprehensive sexuality education doesn't help young people make good decisions.

**TRUTH:** It hasn't been given a chance to work. Very few schools provide sex ed during all four years of high school or provide true comprehensive sexuality education. Many schools provide abstinence-only education that focuses on biology and is usually too little, too late.

**MYTH:** Schools spend so much time teaching about health that kids aren't learning how to read and write.

**TRUTH:** Good sexuality education programs give students a chance to develop reading and writing skills on a subject that is very interesting to them. Also, students who are healthy and making smart choices tend to do better in school. They're more focused.

**MYTH:** Teaching young people about contraception will encourage them to have sex.

**TRUTH:** It's just the opposite. Studies have shown that comprehensive sexuality education helps young people postpone getting sexually involved. Also, many people agree that it's best to stress abstinence as the most effective way to prevent unplanned pregnancy and STDs. But, the reality is that most people will have sex sometime during their young adulthood, many during their teenage years. Young people need to know what to do to prevent pregnancy and STDs before they become sexually active. This is not a mixed message. It's a realistic one.

**MYTH:** Most parents are against comprehensive sexuality education being taught in schools.

**TRUTH:** Most parents support sexuality education in the schools and are relieved to know that their children are getting information they need to deal with complex sexuality issues. Most adults did not receive sexuality education and feel uncomfortable discussing these issues with children.

School programs can help improve communication between young people and their parents.

**MYTH:** Making condoms available in school encourages young people to have sex.

**TRUTH:** Actually, giving out contraceptives in school encourages youths who are having unprotected sex to use condoms and other forms of contraception to protect themselves from pregnancy and STDs. It also encourages young people who have decided to become sexually active to use protection from the very first experience onward.

**MYTH:** Condoms don't work and promoting condom use gives people a false sense of security.

**TRUTH:** Condoms don't usually fail, condom users do. When condoms are used consistently and correctly they are more than 95 percent effective at preventing pregnancy and STD transmission. That's far better than using nothing at all. Most people don't know how to use condoms correctly because they never received good instruction on their use, and/or they do not use them every time they have sex. People who participate in sex education that includes demonstration of condom use and provides people with practice negotiating for condom use have a much greater chance of using condoms correctly every time they have sex.

**MYTH:** Talking about homosexuality will encourage young people to become homosexuals.

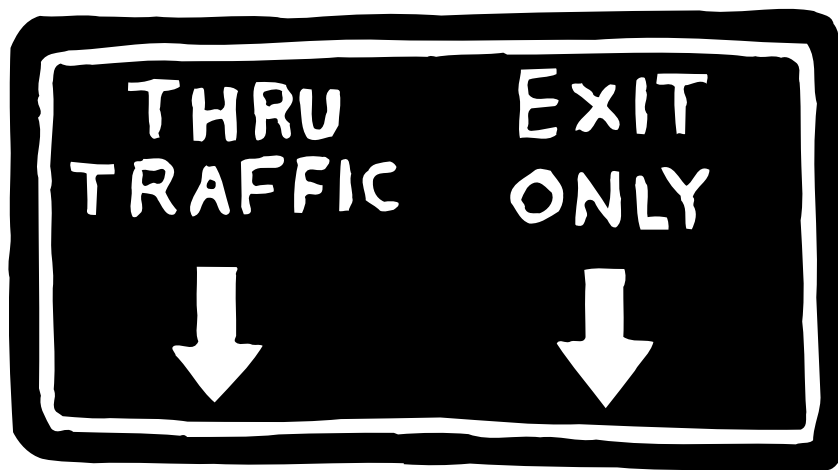
**TRUTH:** Giving people information about this subject will help them learn about themselves and understand others. Giving young people a chance to discuss sexual orientation and other aspects of sex is a good way for them to figure out who they are. And that helps them make better choices. It does not promote any particular sexual orientation or lifestyle.

**MYTH:** AIDS is God's punishment to gays.

**TRUTH:** AIDS is an illness. It is caused by a virus called HIV, which is passed from one person to another when they participate in certain behaviors. Some of these behaviors are sexual, others are not. People of all ages, races and sexual orientations have been infected with this virus. It does not discriminate.

## Tips for Public Speaking

- 1. Put It on Paper.** Write down what you plan to say. Make sure you include all the important points you want to make. You can do this either by writing out your speech or just listing key points — whichever makes you most comfortable.
- 2. Read Aloud.** Read what you have written aloud, several times. This helps you determine if anything sounds awkward. It will also tell you how much time you need to make your case. Learn how to say difficult words or names in advance and practice pronouncing them often.
- 3. Watch Yourself.** Read your speech aloud while standing in front of a mirror. Try to look up from your paper several times. Train yourself to look up often so that you can make eye contact with your audience. Take pauses when you need to and breathe deeply.
- 4. Speak Clearly and Slowly.** Never rush through what you want to say. If you must make your speech shorter, then edit carefully and make every word count.
- 5. Repeat Yourself.** Make your most important points, in different ways, at least two times so that your audience really hears those points.
- 6. Make Memories.** Make the last things you say positive and memorable. Leave them feeling ready to take action and with you 100 percent.
- 7. Visualize It.** Use charts, graphs or other illustrations to back up your points.



## Sample Position Paper

(Instructions: Use for speaking to the school board or other groups. Can also send as a letter to school board members.)

We deserve the chance to graduate from high school disease and pregnancy free. We're entitled to have good relationships with others, to find jobs that we like and that can support us and our future families.

Comprehensive sexuality education can help us move on to futures that are full of hope and promise.

It's so much more than sex ed. It is positive education that promotes healthy lifestyles and smart choices. It is not just about biological function or disease. Although it includes the basic anatomy and reproductive facts, comprehensive sexuality education covers a broad range of topics, including gender roles, relationships, dating and communication, self-esteem and body image, being a good friend, decision-making, tolerance and respect for differences. These classes also teach basic facts about contraception, safer sex, pregnancy, parenting, and sexually transmitted diseases. They also teach us decision-making, communication, negotiation and refusal skills.

This approach not only gives young people the skills we need to develop into sexually healthy adults, it also makes us into better friends, partners, lovers, parents and professionals.

Solid sex ed teaches us to distinguish fact and fiction in the media - especially with regard to sex, which is so prevalent in today's media. It helps us question the "follow-the-crowd" mentality that leads so many teens to dangerous decisions. It may even begin to help us challenge the widely held belief that "it can't happen to me." Additionally, comprehensive sexuality education can help teens develop lifelong healthy habits and the ability to take responsibility for our own actions.

Giving young people information about contraception and safer sex does not encourage us to have sex. No study has shown that to be true. More importantly, we can testify to the fact that many older teens are choosing to have sex, whether or not they receive information and education.

At its best, sexuality education can help us understand the consequences of our actions, without using scare tactics or threats. It can build and enhance our self-esteem so we take care of ourselves, so that we can graduate from high school healthy and free of disease and pregnancy.

Support us in those goals. Give us solid sexuality education.