



THE ROADMAP



A Teen Guide To Changing
Your School's Sex Ed

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Revving Up....

Dear Fellow Student:

When we talk to other young people about their sex ed classes, we hear the same message over and over: "Too little, too late." This guide can help you change that in your high school.

The Network for Family Life Education at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, developed this guide, along with our advice and support. It all started when the teen editors of *SEX, ETC.* realized that many young people had a common complaint. Their sex ed classes, they said, failed to give them the information and skills they need to navigate a world saturated in sex. We saw a connection.

SEX, ETC., a national newsletter written by teens for teens, is used in thousands of health and sexuality classes around the country to get students talking about important stuff, like relationships and making smart choices. We thought a guide, designed to help students get better sex ed in their schools, would be a great extension of the work that *SEX, ETC.* already does. Like *SEX, ETC.*, this guide gives young people a voice in the debate over young people's sexuality and gives them a say in their own education.

It puts the power in your hands to get the information and skills you need to graduate from high school pregnancy and disease free.

This guide gives you a step-by-step action plan for getting your community to start talking about teenage sexuality and sex ed. It gives you tools for finding out what type of education your fellow students feel they need. And, it tells you what makes a good sex ed class.

If you follow the steps in this guide, you can at least start a challenging discussion in your community. At best, you can help steer the sexuality education program at your school in a new direction. At least, you can get adults and youth talking.

With today's young people facing tons of pressures, as well as being bombarded with images of sex on everything from the nightly news to prime-time TV, your role as a student activist is crucial. Only when young people speak up and say, "We need honest, accurate information, along with good decision-making skills," can we hope to change the state of sexuality education in American high schools.

Thanks for having the courage and the concern to take on this project. It could be a long, tough road trip, but stick to your map. Be persistent and try not to get discouraged if change happens one mile at a time. If you're patient and persistent, chances are you'll eventually make it to your destination. Call the Network for Family Life Education with concerns or if you need help (contact information is on the front page). And be sure to let us know how this guide works for you. Good luck!

Best Wishes,

The Editors of *SEX, ETC.*



How to Use *THE ROADMAP*

When you first start reading *The Roadmap*, you might feel a little overwhelmed. We have provided a lot of information and a lot of instruction on what you should do. That's because we want to be as thorough as possible.

But we realize that you may be tackling a lot of this alone. And that you won't always get cooperation from your school officials.

So, the best attitude to use in approaching this guide is: Be realistic. And be happy with small steps.

There is one thing you absolutely must do before you get started. You must read the first section, "Tools for the Road," which provides basic — but crucial — information about sex ed, teen sexuality and other issues. So, before you even turn the key, read this section.

Next, you might want to take one piece of the guide (the student survey or community forum, for example) and start figuring out how to get it done. If you finish only your one chosen piece of the journey during the school year, that will be a victory. You — and other students — can build on the project from year to year.

Remember that you, as an advocate, have certain rights. You shouldn't quit just because a teacher or principal discourages you (assuming that happens). You have the right to gather information. You have the right to present that information to your school board. You have the right to organize a public meeting in a public place. You have the right to petition other public bodies, such as the Parent-Teacher Association, to help you. You have the right to know your school's policies on sex ed. And, you have the right to ask your school to provide you with honest information so you can make smart choices about your future.

The Roadmap can help you do it.



A Note About the Network

This guide was developed by the Network for Family Life Education, a program located at the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Founded in 1981, the Network is a leading national advocate for comprehensive, timely family life/sexuality education in schools and communities. The Network believes that family life/sexuality education is an important part of comprehensive health education in all U.S. schools. We encourage instruction that promotes responsible, healthy behaviors, understanding relationships, building strong families and preventing teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

We believe that effective family life education includes instruction about abstinence, waiting to have sex, monogamy and using contraceptives to reduce the risk of disease and unplanned pregnancy. Good family life education should empower young people by teaching them how to make smart decisions, how to communicate and how to say no, if that's what they want. It should be taught by well-trained teachers who allow students to have open discussions. It should also involve parents and the community.

The Network's biggest project is *SEX, ETC.*, a national newsletter written by teens for teens on health and sexuality issues. It started in 1994 when it circulated to about 10,000 New Jersey high school students. Today, *SEX, ETC.* has become part of sex ed classes across the country, with millions of copies distributed nationwide. There is also now a *SEX, ETC.* Web site that attracts hundreds of thousands of teens each year. In 1997, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy recognized *SEX, ETC.* for its success in giving teens a voice in the fight against teen pregnancy.

This guide is, in a way, an extension of *SEX, ETC.* In the same way that *SEX, ETC.* gives teens a place to have their voices heard across the country, this guide is designed to help teens be heard in their own schoolyards — where it often counts the most.

The *SEX, ETC.*
Editorial Board

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