

Join the national conversation!



Focus Words

capacity | distribute | method | morality | abstain



Weekly Passage

The United States has a high rate of teen pregnancies. Sexually transmitted diseases are also common among teens. Each year, about one million teenaged girls become pregnant. One in four young people gets a sexually transmitted disease before turning twenty-one.

Some people say schools have the capacity to make a difference. They think sex education can help students make better choices. For example, students can talk about peer pressure that leads to having sex too early. They can practice saying no if they are not ready. Some schools also distribute information about methods for safer sex.

Other people think parents should teach kids what is right and wrong. They say sex education should be the parents' responsibility. They believe only parents can

teach their children morality. It is hard to teach about such a mature topic in school, others say. Students might just make jokes or misbehave.

Some people believe schools must only teach students to abstain or stay away from sex until marriage. They think teaching students about safer sex is like saying that sex at a young age is okay.

Since 1991, the government has spent about half billion dollars on programs that focus on abstinence. Other people say, however, that students need more information. Should schools try to help prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases? What is appropriate to discuss at school?

Unit 2.03**Health issues in education: What is appropriate for our schools?**
Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
capacity	(n.) - an ability			
distribute	(v.) - to give out			
method	(n.) - a way of doing something			
morality	(n.) - a sense of right and wrong; values			
abstain	(v.) - to choose not to do something			

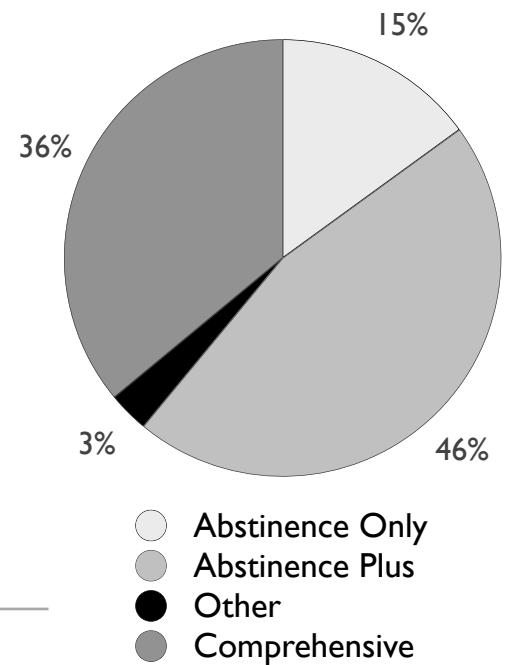
Health issues in education: What is appropriate for our schools?



Problem of the Week

The graph shows the results from a 2004 poll. In this poll, parents were asked which method of sex education they preferred. They chose from these three methods:

- ▶ **Abstinence Only:** Students are taught that abstaining from pre-marital sex is the only safe, **moral** choice.
- ▶ **Abstinence Plus:** Abstinence is presented as the safest, most moral option. However, Abstinence Plus programs **distribute** information about safer sex as well.
- ▶ **Comprehensive:** The Comprehensive approach does not suggest that teen sex is immoral. It provides lots of information about safer sex in an effort to help students develop the **capacity** to make good choices.



Option 1: What percent of parents prefer Abstinence Only?

- A) 36%
- B) 49%
- C) 15%
- D) 100%

Option 2: Based only on the information in the graph, is the following statement true, false, or does the graph not tell you enough information to decide?

“85% of parents prefer sex education programs that provide safer sex information.”

Discussion Question: Only a small percentage of parents prefer the **Abstinence-Only method**. But both Abstinence-Only and Abstinence-Plus are based on the idea that abstinence is the most **moral** option. So both these statements are true:

1. Only 15% of Americans favor Abstinence-Only sex education.
2. Over 60% of Americans favor sex education that encourages abstinence.

Without changing the **distribution** of opinion, we can make things look very different. This means pollsters and politicians have the **capacity** to manipulate how information will be interpreted. If you were in favor of Abstinence-Only programs, which statistic would you probably use? If you were in favor of programs that taught about contraception and safer sex, which statistic would you probably use? What does this suggest about statistics in general?

Health issues in education: What is appropriate for our schools?



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Public schools should not teach sex education. Parents should decide what they want to teach their children.

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

B Public schools should teach students to abstain from sex until marriage.

C Public schools should teach students about safer sex to help them avoid unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases.

D Public schools should teach different kinds of sex education classes. One kind would teach abstinence. Another would teach about safer sex. Parents would decide which class students can take.

E _____

I believe that...

I agree with you because. . .

*You make a good point, but
have you considered...*

*Can you show me
evidence in the text that
supports what you said?*

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

Unit 2.03

Health issues in education: What is appropriate for our schools?

Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professors Seemy and Kahn are at a staff meeting about sex education.

“I’m not comfortable with schools teaching about sex,” says Professor Seemy. “Schools shouldn’t be acting in that **capacity**. Teen sex doesn’t fit with my idea of **morality**.”

Professor Seemy continues. “Instead of sex education, let’s talk about abstinence,” he says. “We’ll **distribute** pledges to the students. By signing them, they promise to **abstain** from sexual activity.”

“I don’t think that’s the best **method** for keeping kids safe,” says Professor Kahn.

“Abstinence pledges work!” says Professor Seemy. “I can prove it.”

Question:

Are students who sign an abstinence pledge less likely to have sex?

Hypothesis:

Students who sign an abstinence pledge will be less likely to have sex than students who do not sign an abstinence pledge.

Materials:

- ▶ Abstinence pledges
- ▶ High school students

Procedure:

1. Distribute abstinence pledges to high school students.
2. Wait one year.
3. Find 100 17-year-old students who signed the pledge.
4. Find 100 17-year-old students who chose not to sign the pledge.
5. Interview students about their sexual activity.

Data:

	Percentage who engaged in sexual activity
Signed abstinence pledge	30%
Did not sign abstinence pledge	30%

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?



Writing Prompt

Health issues in education:
What is appropriate for our
schools?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

capacity | distribute | method | morality | abstain

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

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