

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 that 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?

### TEACHER - Discussion Questions

- ▶ What are some of the problems that sex education at home or at school has the capacity to solve?
- ▶ Why do some people believe that schools should not distribute information about safer sex?
- ▶ What do "abstinence-only" programs teach students?
- ▶ Do you think schools have a responsibility to teach students morality?
- ▶ What type of sex education is most appropriate for middle and high schools?

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

## Focus Word Chart - TEACHER VERSION

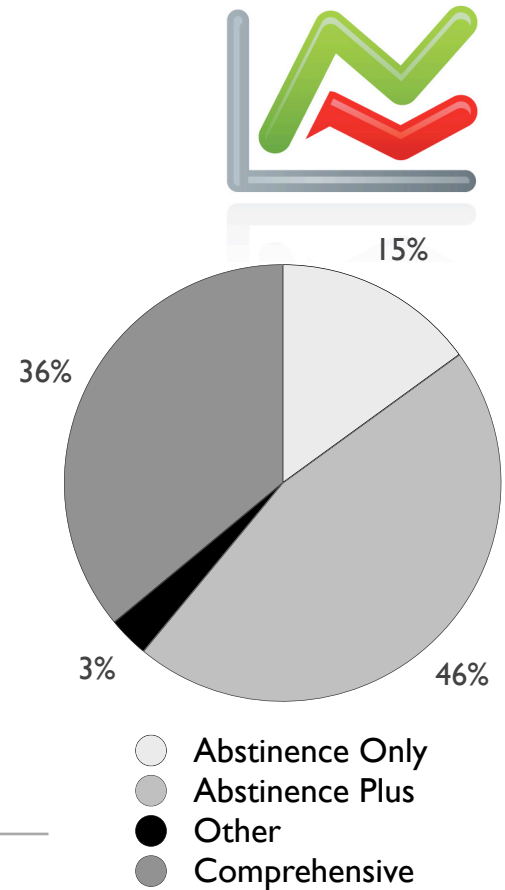
Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
capacity	(n.) - an ability	capacities		capacitate incapacitate capacious capacitor	capable captive forceps
distribute	(v.) - to give out	distributes distributing distributed		redistribute distributable distribution distributive	tribute tributary
method	(n.) - a way of doing something	methods (pl.)		methodical methodology methodological	
morality	(n.) - a sense of right and wrong; values	moralities	moral (adj.)	demoralize moralize moralist moral (n.) morals (pl.) moralize	morale
abstain	(v.) - to choose not to do something	abstains abstaining abstained		abstention abstainer abstinent abstinence	retain sustain obtain contain tenet

# 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.”*

Answer: Not enough information. 82% do prefer programs that give out safer sex information, but we don't know about the 3% who prefer “other” - these “other” programs could either include such information or not.

**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?

### Debating the Issue

## 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.

**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** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# GO!



Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

*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:

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### TEACHER

Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

## 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

### TEACHER

#### Real Research:

-This article describes a study that found students who signed abstinence pledges were just as likely as their non-signing peers to be sexually active.

Stein, R. (2008, December 29). Premarital abstinence pledges ineffective, study finds. The Washington Post. Retrieved on December 8, 2009 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/28/AR2008122801588.html>

#### Fast Fact:

-According to the CDC, a 2002 study found that 30% of unmarried teens age 15 – 17 had engaged in sexual intercourse.

**Classroom Discussion:** Summarize the real research. (Young people who sign abstinence pledges are as likely as their non-signing peers to be sexually active.) Are students surprised by this finding? Why or why not? How does the finding connect to this week’s topic? Which side(s) of the debate could it support?

## 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?

Not supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

The same percentage of students engaged in sexual activity whether or not they signed the abstinence pledge.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



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

capacity | distribute | method | morality | abstain

Check off what you accomplished:

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

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

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

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

## Unit 2.03

### Source References:

- » Public School Parent's Network: [www.psparents.net/sex\\_education.htm](http://www.psparents.net/sex_education.htm)
- » Center for AIDS Prevention Studies: [www.caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/abstinence.php](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/abstinence.php)
- » Beliefnet: [www.beliefnet.com/story/168/story\\_16872\\_2.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/168/story_16872_2.html)
- » Women's Health Channel: [www.womenshealthchannel.com/teenpregnancy](http://www.womenshealthchannel.com/teenpregnancy)
- » USA Today: [www.usatoday.com/news/health/child/2002-07-11-sex-ed-controversy](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/child/2002-07-11-sex-ed-controversy)
- » Advocates for Youth [www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/stateevaluations/index.htm](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/stateevaluations/index.htm)