



Position Statement

SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Education lasts a lifetime and plays a significant role in the decisions we make about our lives. Learning about sexuality is a normal and healthy part of this lifelong process. National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) believes that a comprehensive sexuality education program helps young people develop positive views of sexuality, gives them accurate information regarding health and sexuality, and assists them in acquiring the skills to make healthy decisions regarding their own sexuality now and in the future.

Sexuality education occurs in many settings and requires a collaborative effort by parents, teachers, community leaders, and medical personnel. The role of the schools should be to give young people the information they need to develop their own values, to enhance their self-esteem, to provide insight into their relationships with members of both genders, and to better understand their obligations and responsibilities to themselves and others.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

NASP believes sexuality education should begin early in life and should follow a curriculum that:

- Is part of a comprehensive, K–12 school health education program
- Is developmentally appropriate with respect to content and instructional methods
- Respects the diversity of values, beliefs, and cultures within the community
- Teaches respect for members of all sexual orientations
- Has the support of the school administration, the governing school board, and the broader community
- Addresses a wide range of factors related to sexuality such as: AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; the abuse of alcohol and other drugs and their effect on personal health; pregnancy prevention; parenting skills; reproductive and sexual health care; information regarding masturbation as a part of normal sexual behavior, accurate information about sexual orientation; healthy decision-making; and effective communication skills, including the skills necessary to refuse unwanted sexual contact
- Includes the prevention of high-risk behaviors. Research shows that successful prevention programs provide both accurate information and instruction in the skills necessary to cope with difficult problems and situations. Abstinence Plus programs, which impart accurate information and comprehensive social skills training in addition to sending a strong abstinence message, have been shown more effective than Abstinence Only programs in reducing pregnancy, reducing sexually transmitted disease, and increasing resilience to other risk factors
- Is taught by qualified teachers who have had specialized training in human sexuality and who receive ongoing training and supervision by qualified supervisors

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

With their training in human development and behavior, psychological and learning processes, and educational systems, school psychologists can take a leadership role in the integration of appropriate sexuality education into the school system. Recognizing that the issue of sexuality education is controversial, NASP encourages all school psychologists to become informed about the issues and to use their expertise to facilitate effective sexuality education and to provide appropriate related services to all students.

In collaboration with other support and educational personnel, school psychologists can:

- Assist in developing, implementing and evaluating a sexuality education curriculum that is appropriate for the children's developmental levels, and cultural identities of the student population
- Provide counseling for students on issues related to sexuality as needed
- Foster a supportive and tolerant atmosphere for students with all sexual orientations
- Facilitate parental and community involvement in sexuality education in the home, school, and community
- Help teachers, administrators, and parents articulate their feelings and concerns regarding sexuality education
- Respond to those in the broader community who are concerned about sexuality education and its impact on student behavior

NASP believes comprehensive sexuality education is essential to promote the mental, physical, academic, and emotional health of our children. In the absence of this education, students base their decisions regarding sexual activity, abstinence, birth control, dating, and relationships on the misinformation provided them by peers, television, movies, and what they read in novels and the popular press. Without the intervention of responsible and caring adults, the decisions students make may stem from myth or ignorance. Given the lifelong implications that decisions regarding sexuality can have, NASP believes that comprehensive sexuality education should be an integral part of the school curriculum.

RESOURCES

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- Calderone, M. S., & Ramey, J. W. (1982). *Talking with your child about sex. Questions and answers for children from birth to puberty*. NY: Ballentine Books.
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- Lively, V., & Lively, E. (1991). *Sexual development of young children*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishing.
- Madaras, L. (1988). *The What's Happening to My Body Book for Boys* (New edition). New York: New Market Press.
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Sanderson, C. A. (2000). The effectiveness of a sexuality education newsletter in influencing teenagers' knowledge and attitudes about sexual involvement and drug use. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15, 674–681.

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