

Sexuality Education

Would you fly an airplane without being taught how to fly?

You might get lucky . . . but odds are eventually, you'd crash.

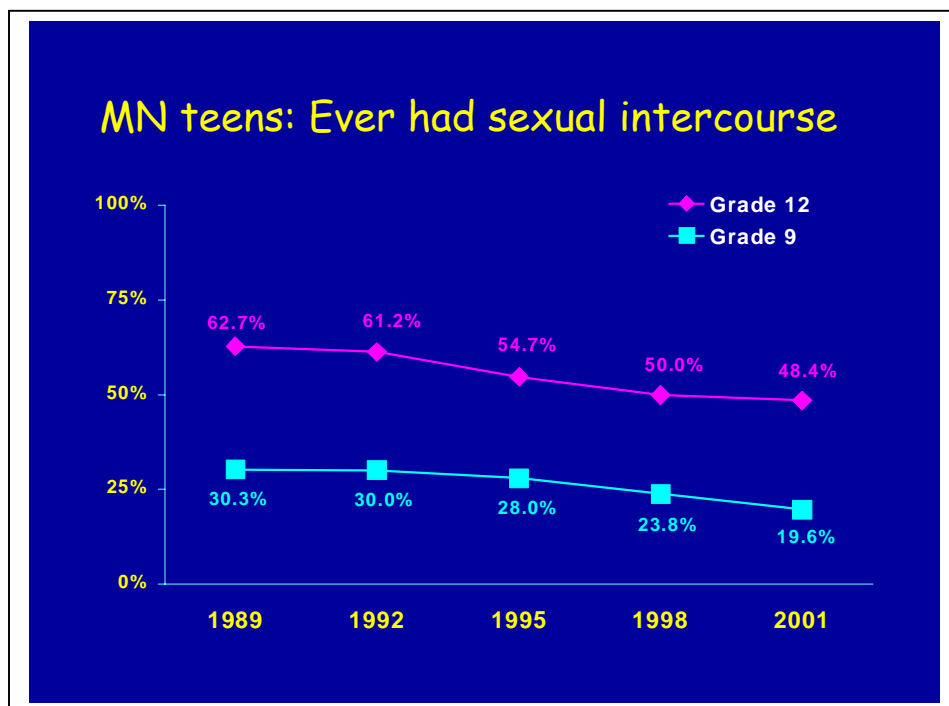
WHAT IS Comprehensive Sexuality Education?

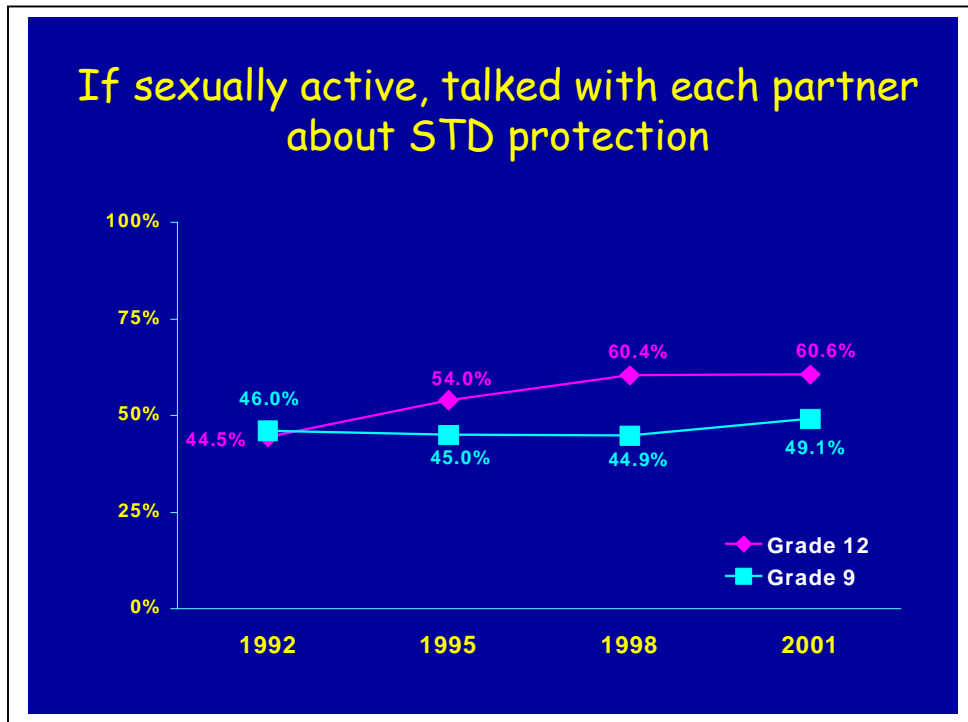
Comprehensive Sexuality Education - a lot of words for a simple idea. It means giving youth the information and skills needed to be able to make healthy, responsible decisions about their sexual health. It is based on research of what works best, which includes things like:

- ✳ Using a variety of teaching methods;
- ✳ Including activities that address social pressure;
- ✳ Providing practice of communication skills;
- ✳ Focusing on reducing risky behaviors (such as unprotected sex) that lead to unexpected pregnancy, HIV, or a sexually transmitted infection (STD); and
- ✳ Using goals, methods, and materials appropriate to the age and culture.

WHY DOES IS IT MATTER?

According to the 2001 Minnesota Student Survey, there is a large but declining percentage of youth who are making the decision to be sexually active. Of those who are sexually active, more youth are discussing pregnancy and STD protection, but only 50% of 9th graders and 67% of 12th graders, having sex always use a contraceptive.¹





STD: Sexually transmitted disease

A sexually active teenager who doesn't use contraception has a 90% chance of getting pregnant within one year.² Teenagers who have had comprehensive sexuality education are more likely to use contraceptives than those who have not participated in a program.³ There is no scientific research showing that abstinence-only programs have actually delayed the onset of intercourse or reduced any other measure of sexual activity among teens.⁴ In addition, research has shown that programs that discuss both abstinence and contraception, including condoms, do not increase sexual intercourse among teens.⁵

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

While flying an airplane is dangerous without comprehensive education, so too is having a sexual relationship. Many youth choose to be abstinent, but some are choosing to have a sexual relationship. Making this decision without the needed education can result in a personal crash . . . an unexpected pregnancy, contracting HIV or a STD, or unachieved academic goals. These events can change the whole course of a person's life.

WHAT CAN I DO?

There are people who want to limit sexuality education in our schools (e.g. learning only about abstinence). If you believe in the worth of CSE, speak up to support it. Your voice can make a difference. Parents and elected officials need to know how important a good education is to youth.

¹ MSS

² Not Just for Girls: The Roles of Boys and Men in Teen Pregnancy, K.A. Moore and A. Driscoll, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Feb. 2002.

³ Grunseit, A. and S. Lippax. Effects of Sex Education.

⁴ Kirby, D. No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1997.

⁵ Kirby, D. "School-Based Programs to Reduce Sexual Risk-Taking Behaviors: Sexuality and HIV/AIDS Education, Health Clinics, and Condom Availability programs" Sant Cruz, CA, 1994.