A New School Year - WISE Work to Do

During the 2010-2011 school year, the WISE Team will continue to work with the eight WISE districts as they move towards providing the best sexuality education for students. Funding from the Grove and Packard Foundations and their partners in the WISE Initiative will make it possible for every WISE District in Oregon to complete:

- Standards & Assessment Training
- Mapping & Alignment Training
- Curriculum Training
- School Health Advisory Council Training
- District Sexuality Education Policy

AND – All Oregon WISE Grantees will participate in:

- Regional Trainings on:
- Using Effective Teaching Strategies Inclusive of All Students, Including LGBTQ Youth
- Using Youth Social Networking to Deliver Effective Prevention Messaging Within Your School District’s System

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Sex Ed – It’s Elementary!

Sex education? In elementary school? What do primary teachers need to know?

When people think of sex education, they usually imagine a classroom full of high school students, or maybe middle school students. But elementary school students? That seems awfully young, doesn’t it? Is there such thing as sex education for those in grades K-5?

There is indeed! Oregon Revised Statute 336.455 reads that “each school district shall provide age-appropriate human sexuality education courses in all public elementary and secondary schools.” And given that sexuality education is a life-long process, it makes sense that it should be addressed in all grades. So what are “age-appropriate” lessons in sexuality for younger children? Read on for some examples, adapted from Brad Victor’s document “Age-Appropriate, Comprehensive, Sexuality Education Topic Guidelines.”

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Grades K-3: During these years, students should learn:

- Personal hygiene – it’s important to keep all body parts clean and healthy.
- Uncomfortable, inappropriate, and appropriate touch – young children should learn that people touch each other to show affection and care. However, they should also learn that no one should touch their private parts except for health reasons or to clean them. Stay away from unsafe objects –
- Students need to know not to pick up needles, broken glass, or condoms that they might see on the street or in a park. While it may be too early to discuss what these items are used for, it is not too early to let children know to stay away from them as they may carry diseases or hurt them in other ways.
- The body parts and their proper anatomical names – Just in the same way you teach children where there arms, legs, and stomachs are, you should also let them know about penises and vulvas. Treating sexual body parts like other parts of the body sends the message to students that they should not be embarrassed to discuss sexual health.

Grades 4-5: During these years, students should learn:

- Decision-making skills, including refusal skills – During grades 4 and 5, students should learn that many things influence their decision making, such as parents, friends, and the media. They should learn to consider many options before making a decision and should not do something just because their friends are doing it.
- The reproductive system – usually in grade 5, students learn about all the body systems – and that should include the reproductive system. Glossing over these body parts does not fool anyone in the class; instead it might make that topic more mysterious, leading to students searching for information about it from less trustworthy or healthy sources.
- Puberty – while some children (especially boys) may not experience puberty for a few more years, many are going through puberty during grades 4 and 5, and waiting until middle school to address this important developmental phase may be too late. A 2010 study published in *Pediatrics* found that by age 8, 18 percent of white girls and 43 percent of African-American girls had begun to develop breasts (one of the first signs of puberty – menstruation will begin, on average, two years later).

Getting to Know WISE Team Member Jess Bogli

In 2006, Jess decided to pursue a career as an education consultant to give her the opportunity to provide comprehensive support to school health organizations.

Jess’s work includes facilitating meetings, workshops and strategic plans, presenting and speaking at conferences, and developing curriculum and materials specifically around school health issues. She was recently selected to be a CDC/DASH trainer for CDC’s Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool.

Jess volunteers in her community and for a variety of organizations - the Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition (Oregon’s Coordinated School Health Advocacy Group), Oregon’s Walk/Bike to School Committee, the Society of State Directors of Health and Physical Education, and Albina Rotary Club.

Jess loves to sew and screenprint. She’s recently been screenprinting fabric in her basement and then using it to make pillows, table runners and napkins for gifts for friends and family. On another note, Jess and her brother grew up in a home with parents that talked to each of them about sex fairly openly. In fact, on their living room couch were two dolls given to Elin (her mother) by a close friend that helped educate Jess and her brother Dave about body parts. When you see Jess, ask her to show a picture of the dolls.

If you haven’t met Jess yet, you soon will. Jess does many of the WISE trainings.

With a BS in Health Education from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, and a Masters of Science in Education/Curriculum and Instruction from Portland State University, Jess began her career as a middle school health teacher in Portland.

In 2003 Jess extended her passion and knowledge beyond the classroom, and became the Health Education Curriculum Specialist at the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). She worked closely with a team of specialists from both ODE and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to implement coordinated school health. In 2005, she was selected to be one of 17 people nationally to help revise and develop the National Health Education Standards, which were published early in 2007.
Let's Talk About Sexting

Teachers, schools and school employees do all they can to make the school a safe environment for all students. Part of keeping your school a safe environment is allowing youth to explore healthy relationships. Teachers and school administrators need to understand how youth are accessing and using technology to develop their relationships with others. The best way to figure this out, of course, is to create a school environment where students, teachers and administrators can have open and honest discussions about the issues youth face.

Many dating relationships among youth may include the practice of flirting over cell phones and the internet. In some instances, the flirting may include the practice of “sexting” - sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between mobile phones. In many situations, sexting is consensual. In others, sexting may be done under coercion or personal messages or photos may be shared inappropriately.

So – what should schools do about sexting? There is no clear answer. In Oregon, there is no legal definition of sexting and no legislation that mandates what schools should or should not when sexting occurs among students.

Here are some recommendations to consider –

- School policies should address how the school will handle sexting cases.
- School legal counsel should have input in crafting sexting policy.
- Students and parents should be aware of such policies.
- Avoid identifying all sexting as child porn with its corresponding legal ramifications. This may prevent youth from reporting abusive situations because they don’t want to get into trouble.
- School personnel should be wary of searching cell phones for images or messages. If such a search is necessary, let legal authorities do this.
- If sexting occurs off campus and does not disrupt school environment or have an impact at school on a student, school personnel might want to stay out of it.
- School officials are required to respond to a hostile environment. If sexting creates a hostile environment in your school, the school must take action to stop the situation.
- Remember that consensual sexting is not hostile.

Looking at the law –

As stated earlier, Oregon does not currently have sexting laws. However, sixteen states have introduced or are considering bills or resolutions aimed at sexting. The legislation generally aims to educate young people about the risks of sexting, deter them from the practice, and apply appropriate penalties to those who do engage in sexting. Not everyone agrees that having laws on sexting is a good idea. However, as laws pertaining to sexting are passed, it is an important part of sexuality education to inform youth of those laws. For a synopsis of sexting legislation in other states, see the National Conference of State Legislatures website: http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=19696.