

Broader Sex Education

Too HOT To Handle

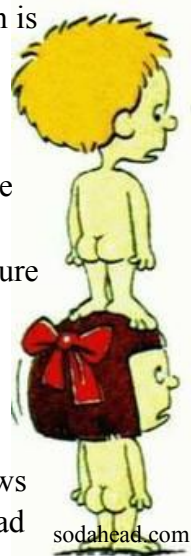
Should sex education be part of the Common Core curriculum?

By Renee Huang

According to the latest survey conducted nationally by the PublicMind of Fairleigh Dickinson University, 44% Americans have a misconception of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that sex education is part of them. Why would almost half of Americans think so? I think the reason is pretty simple, which is that sexual knowledge is what we are going to need in the rest of our lives. After graduation, and physical pleasure plays a vital role as mental pleasure does.

I was born and grow up in a country (China) where people are thought to hold more traditional views about this “hot” topic. My parents had never talked about sex in front of me until I turned 18. And all I had been taught about sex at school was what male and female genitals are consist of in biology class. No one has ever taught us that using a condom is necessary or how to wear it. According to Chinese National Health and Family Planning Commission, on average, there are 13 million Chinese females accepting abortion every year, 1/4 of which are teenagers. The United States, however, as one of the developed countries, and is usually thought to be the symbol of freedom and be open to sensitive issues, hasn't been open enough to handle this “hot” topic, either.

As the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) pointed out in its latest survey, nearly half (46.8%) of



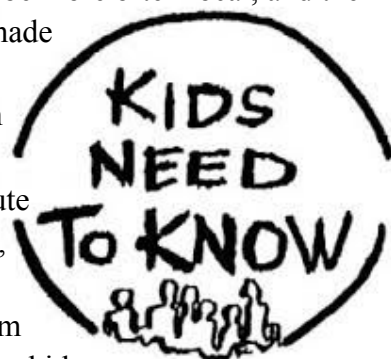
Okay, we took off our clothes, I got on top of you... How long 'til it starts feeling good?
I don't know but I've got a headache already!

American high school students have had sexual intercourse, 34% of which during the previous 3 months. And 40.9% of them said they didn't use a condom last time they had sex, which means high risk sexual behaviors are happening to a good number of adolescents.

Either in China or America, these data terrify the parents and people who are concerned about adolescent health and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. And according to unpublished tabulations of data from the National Survey of Family Growth, many sexually experienced teens (46% of males and 33% of females) do not receive formal instruction about contraception before they first have sex. Yet still, sex education has never been part of the Common Core curriculum, even in America.

But how far exactly has America gone in terms of sex education? In such a diverse nation, education turns to be more often local, and the policy is usually made decentralized.

Given information gathered by Guttmacher Institute at March 1st, 2015, though every state provides some form of sex education for kids public schools, only 18 states and the District of Columbia require that schools “provide instruction on contraception.”



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Contraception, for example, is not less important than math or grammar, and unintentional pregnancy is not healthy for both the kid and the society. Kids need to know more and the truth as well. Sex education should be part of the Common Core curriculum, so that kids can certainly get to know more sexual knowledge in an appropriate way. Here comes the question, **How broader sex education should be?**

In the lately published article “What School Should Teach Kids About Sex?” of Jessica Lahey (an English teacher and a contributing writer for *the Atlantic*), she reports what Dan Savage said in her recent phone interview. As commentator and sex advice columnist since 1991, “Savage agrees that the topics most school programs cover, such as reproductive biology, are important emphasized that curriculum often ignore the topics such as consent, pleasure, and effective communication about sex.” These are exactly what would be more practically useful in kids' future lives. As Savage claims, “we should be teaching the real things that can trip people up, things that can ruin people's lives or traumatize them...and what are you or are you not comfortable with, and how do you advocate for yourself?” specific problems like these are more closely connected to people's lives, and would be extremely helpful when they are faced with realistic sexual issues. He also mentioned the importance sex for pleasure, since it is “99.99 percent of sex that people have”.

According to the Sexuality Education and Information Council of the United States, one of the three basic forms of sex education in the U.S.— comprehensive approach — does cover topics such as “human development, abstinence, contraception, disease and pregnancy prevention, as well as skill development for healthy relationships and decision-making.” But only a few states engage in it.



If I've seen anything result from my son's sex education, it's a growing and reasonable opinion on his part that most adults don't tell the real truth about sex, so there's no point in asking them.”

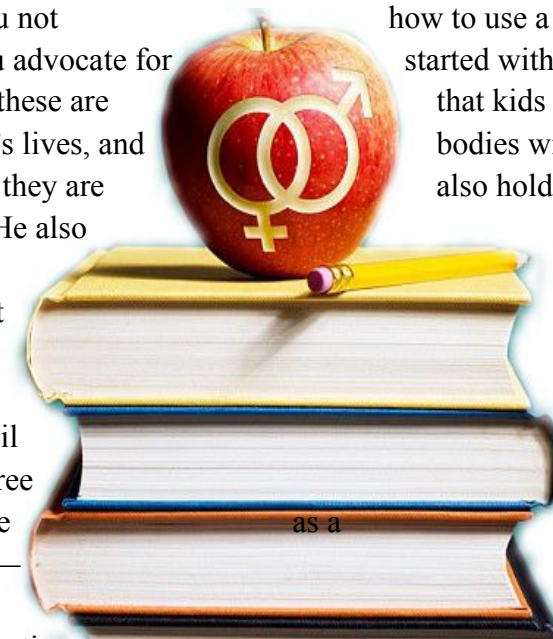
—Alice Dreger, bioethicist, U.S.

What does it mean for parents if the Common Core has a sex education component?

Many parents would not be happy, and it's understandable that they don't like others to decide when or what their children should know about sex. Parents usually do not tell them the truth, neither do other adults. But all of us have to admit that it is necessary to let kids know every piece of the truth in an age- and developmentally appropriate way. Alice Dreger, an American bioethicist and professor of clinical medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, and also a mother, says most of her son's public school sex education “seems to consist of warnings about pregnancy and disease, combined with endless lessons about how to put on a condom.” She thinks it's unnecessary to spend too much time on

how to use a condom, instead, it should be started with “thorough education of parts”, so that kids would have a clear sense of their bodies without misconceptions. Dreger also holds the view that it is crucial for kids to have right perceptions about things like genital “size”, and “masturbation”.

However, in order to let kids access the whole sensitive and “hot” topic, we have to include sex education component of the Common Core. Because only in this way can every kid get a children-based and systematic sex education they need for the sake of their future lives.



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