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1988 Volume V: Hormones and Reproduction

Talking to Kids About Sex and Aids

Guide for Curriculum Unit 88.05.02

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This unit was written in response to the city-wide mandate to provide education about AIDS to all students, K-12, and staff in the New Haven Public Schools. K-4 curricula focuses on hygiene and family relationships; and 9-12 curricula can assume some previous knowledge, if erroneous, about human reproduction. We felt a significant gap existed at the middle school level. The middle school years tend to be the time of physical maturation, the onset of puberty, but at disparate rates. Because of this diversity of student development, teaching human sexuality can appear a staggering task. Teaching AIDS education to middle school students has to include sexual information because students are immersed in sexual growth. But to begin human sexuality with AIDS is clearly putting the cart before the horse. We cannot protect students by withholding information, but only by giving it to them. Into this vacuum we extend a curriculum which stresses healthy human sexual development, with a final chapter on problems of sexuality in which context we discuss AIDS. The theme of our seminar, Hormones and Reproduction, is a basic building block for our presentation of human sexual development. We feel young students can understand and appreciate the predictable pattern of their own development and of mature reproductive cycles, by understanding the concept of hormonal balance as maintained by the hypothalamus. The presentation about AIDS includes a discussion of how the virus invades the body and hides in the macrophages. Because AIDS research is a current frontier of science, some of the AIDS lesson may be obsolete soon. Adaptation to new information will not be difficult. Our curriculum is designed to be used in a variety of situations from a course of several weeks with a single group to a meeting of one evening with parents and students. We hope other teachers will find it useful and adaptable to their needs.

(Recommended for Human Sexuality classes, grades 5-8)

Key Words

Sexuality Adolescence Adolescents AIDS HIV Infection Human Biology Education

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