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Aids and Adolescence

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.05.06
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Although significant strides have been made in understanding AIDS at the scientific level, education continues to be the only preventive measure against HIV infection. In New Haven an AIDS education week is mandated for ninth graders in their social development class. This unit, "AIDS and Adolescence," is to provide a framework, background information, and more lessons to add to that experience. The behavioral factors that put adolescents at risk are discussed, in particular teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and drug abuse.

The issues that made AIDS education controversial introduce the unit. A brief history of the early days of the epidemic is included along with the beginning of AIDS education in New Haven. An explanation of the terms and the full range of the illness is discussed—beginning with the infection by HIV and concluding with AIDS. It is important for adolescents to know how the virus is transmitted as well as the ways it is not.

However, the crucial issue for AIDS education is not just that students know the correct information, but that they use it to make conscious positive choices in their behavior. We ask adolescents to make a complex set of health and personal decisions, each of them crucial to their well-being, at a time in their lives when they are struggling with their own identity, just beginning to think about the future, and questioning those adults that have the information they need. The unit concludes with factors that facilitate the classroom environment for AIDS education.

(Recommended for Social Development I, grade 9)

Key Words

Sexuality Adolescence American AIDS HIV Infection Preventive Measures Adolescents Education

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