



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 5, 2010

Abstinence Education Effective, Study Finds

A study released February 1 by the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine is giving proponents of abstinence-only sex education programs reason to cheer. The federally funded project, published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, found that abstinence education models are more effective than their comprehensive sex education counterparts in encouraging pre-teens from having sex.



In the study, 662 African-American sixth and seventh grade students were split into random groups for participation in Saturday “interventions” programs, with one group attending a session that promoted an abstinence-only message, another attending a session that focused on a “safer sex” message, another attending a session that combined a message of abstinence and safer-sex, and a control group that received a health promotion message.

Results of the study appear to confirm that when kids receive a message focused on abstinence, a majority are more likely to say no to sex. Researchers found that within two years after the programs, only one-third of the students participating in the abstinence-only program reported having sexual intercourse, while more than half of those participating in programs with the safer-sex message (which promoted condom use) said they had sexual intercourse. And more than 40 percent of those students participating in the program that combined abstinence and safer-sex messages reported having sex within the two-year period.

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While the abstinence intervention program did not eliminate sexual activity completely, the study did demonstrate that such a program can successfully reduce the number of adolescents having sex.

Leslee Unruh of the Abstinence Clearinghouse, an organization promoting abstinence education programs nationwide, said that the study proves “what those of us who have been teaching abstinence have known for years,” which is that abstinence-based sex education programs “help develop self control and self esteem, teaching kids they do not need to fall prey to the game of Russian Roulette with condoms.”

Unruh argued that the abstinence message is one that today’s young people are open to. “This study shows youth are making healthier choices and changing their behavior in response to this refreshing message,” she said.



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Dr. David Stevens, CEO of the 16,000-member Christian Medical Association, said the study shows that “science has finally caught up with logic and what parents have known for centuries by empirically demonstrating that equipping teens to abstain from sexual activity is an effective way to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.”

Ironically, at the same time the results of the study were appearing in the February 2010 issue of *Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, published by the American Medical Association, officials at the Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood Federation of America, were touting their own study, which they said demonstrates the ineffectiveness of abstinence-based sex education.

But with no apparent axe to grind in the debate over which sex-education model is the best, Dr. John B. Jemmott III, the University of Pennsylvania professor who led the federally funded study, admitted, “I think we’ve written off abstinence-only education without looking closely at the nature of the evidence.”

Noted Dr. Stevens of the Christian Medical Association, “Many groups and individuals up until yesterday had relentlessly railed against abstinence programs as totally ineffective, even counterproductive. They had used their own studies to convince many legislators, including President Obama, to eliminate federal funding for abstinence programs altogether, in the process depriving teens and their parents from a potent resource that can mean a lifesaving difference.”

A survey from Zogby International found that when parents understand the difference between abstinence education and comprehensive sex education, their support for abstinence programs jumps from 40 percent to 60 percent, while their support for comprehensive sex-ed programs drops from 50 percent to 30 percent.

Concluded Valerie Huber of the National Abstinence Education Association, “If we are serious about reaching teens with the skills they need to resist sexual activity, the findings supporting the effectiveness of abstinence education should not be ignored.”



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