

SEX EDUCATION IN TEXAS



The minimum curriculum standards that guide sex education in Texas took a big leap forward in late 2020 thanks to coordinated advocacy efforts. For the first time since 1997, the State Board of Education updated the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Health Education, making significant improvements in sex education guidelines. But there is still work to do.

The new TEKS offer education on topics such as contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention, and healthy relationships, but the state board stopped short of including standards on consent or information addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ youth.

Although health education, which includes sex ed, is an elective for high school, it is required in middle school. Key topics ranging from reproductive health to contraception to healthy relationships will now be taught to middle schoolers. This represents a shift from the state sanctioned abstinence-only curriculum toward a more comprehensive, “abstinence-plus” model.

The new minimum standards are just a starting point for school districts that teach sex education, as they represent the floor, not the ceiling. Districts can go beyond the TEKS and offer additional information on topics such as consent and inclusivity. School districts adopt sex ed curriculum on the recommendation of

“The limited amount of sex education I did get in school was fear-mongering.

When we had sex ed, no one really listened because our teacher didn't really care.

I can't even remember sex ed class... but I do remember they base it off the diseases you can catch.

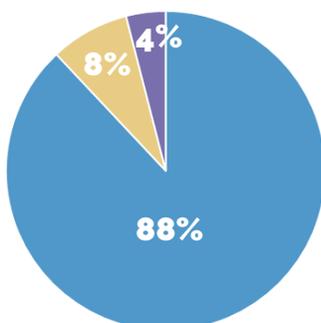
TEXAS YOUNG ADULT LISTENING SESSIONS

the local School Health Advisory Councils, which are comprised of parent and community volunteers.

Texas voters overwhelmingly agree schools should be doing more. In a representative sample of registered voters in the state, commissioned in March 2020 by the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, an overwhelming, bipartisan majority (75%) said an “abstinence-plus” curriculum should be taught in public

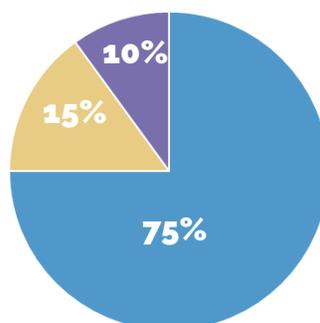
consent & boundaries

It's important for students to learn about consent, including respecting the boundaries set by other people about their bodies.



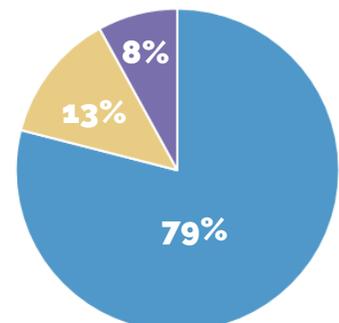
inclusivity

To help prevent bullying of LGBTQ youth, Texas public schools should include standards around cultivating respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity.



contraception & condoms

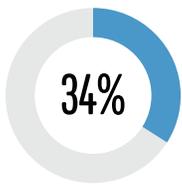
Along with abstinence, sex education in public schools should teach students about condoms and contraception.



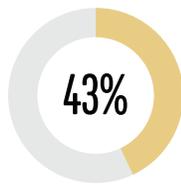
● Agree ● Disagree ● Unsure/Depends

Data from Public Opinion Poll Results 2020.

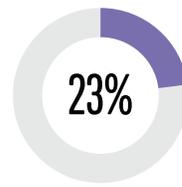
Who is teaching our children? Is it schools?



of young adults **didn't receive** or **don't remember** sex ed.



of young adults say sex ed was **abstinence only**.



of young adults say sex ed was **comprehensive**.

Results from 2020 survey of Texas young adults. More than 300 youth from across the state participated, but survey is not a fully representative sample.

schools. Texas voters think sex ed should include consent and boundaries (88%), LGBTQ+ inclusivity (75%), and contraception and condoms (79%).

WHY IS SEX ED SO IMPORTANT?

Data show that providing age-appropriate, medically accurate information to adolescents does not make them more likely to engage in sexual activity. Rather, it does increase the likelihood that they will protect themselves now and in their adult lives. Understanding key concepts such as consent, boundaries, and inclusivity equips young people with foundational skills that will be relevant in all aspects of their lives.

The Texas Campaign engaged in research to better understand the experience of Texas students related to sex education. While not a representative sample, the study did include surveys, interviews, and listening sessions with more than 725 people across the state. It found that sexual education in Texas tends to portray sex in a negative light, emphasizing abstinence and STIs over healthy relationships and contraception.

When asked, "Did sex education cover any of the following?" 91% said abstinence was covered "all the time." Nearly 80% said the same about STIs. That is in stark contrast to how often schools' sex ed curricula included understanding your body (42%), healthy relationships (38%), birth control (27%), or LGBTQ+ topics (1%). Content aside, almost one-third of young adults in our survey either didn't receive or don't remember the sex education they did receive.

Only 7% of young people in our survey said the sex education they received in school was helpful.

The research also shows young people are keenly aware of what they are missing: they want adults to provide them the information they need to be sexually healthy.

Clearly, adults need to do a better job delivering on our promise to keep young people safe. Helping schools implement the new TEKS is an important first step.

STATE LAWS ABOUT SEX EDUCATION

Curriculum adoption. The law creates School Health Advisory Councils, which are parent and community volunteer groups charged with ensuring that local community values are reflected in health education instruction. State law requires sex ed curriculum to be adopted by school boards on the recommendation of SHACs.

Sex ed content. Instruction must stress abstinence as the preferred and safest way to prevent pregnancy.

Parent rights. Parents have the right to review curriculum, must be notified about sex ed instruction, and have a right to opt their children out of sex education without academic penalty.

What's not included. School districts are not required to offer sex ed, and those that do are not required by law to provide medically accurate information.

To learn more, visit www.texasisready.org.

★ All research reported is from a 2020 Gap Analysis conducted by 1000 Feathers, LLC unless otherwise noted.

★ For more information, visit www.txcampaign.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

