

School-Based Health Clinics and Sex Education

Kerby provides an in-depth critique of how our public schools are addressing sex education and providing sex aids through health clinics. Speaking from a Christian worldview perspective, he looks at the data and concludes that public schools are doing more harm than good in the addressing dangerous sexual activity among teenagers.

School-based Health Clinics

As comprehensive sex education curricula have been promoted in the schools, clinics have been established to provide teens greater access to birth control information and devices. Proponents cite studies that supposedly demonstrate the effectiveness of these clinics on teen sexual behavior. Yet a more careful evaluation of the statistics involved suggests that school-based health clinics do not lower the teen pregnancy rate.

The first major study to receive nationwide attention was DuSable

High School. School administrators were rightly alarmed that before the establishment of a school-based health clinic, three hundred of their one thousand female students became pregnant. After the clinic was opened, the media widely reported that the number of pregnant students dropped to 35.

As more facts came to light, the claims seemed to be embellished. School officials admitted that they kept no records of the number of pregnancies before the operation of the clinic and that three hundred was merely an estimate. Moreover, school officials could not produce statistics for the number of abortions the girls received as a result of the

clinic.

The most often-cited study involved the experience of the clinic at Mechanics Arts High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Researchers found that a drop in the number of teen births during the late 1970s coincided with an increase in female participation at the school-based clinics. But at least three important issues undermine the validity of this study.

First, some of the statistics are anecdotal rather than statistical. School officials admitted that the schools could not document the decrease in pregnancies. The Support Center for School-Based Clinics acknowledged that “most of the evidence for the success of that program is based upon the clinic’s own records and the staff’s knowledge of births among students. Thus, the data undoubtedly do not include all births.”

Second, an analysis of the data done by Michael Schwartz of the Free Congress Foundation found that the total female enrollment of the two schools included in the study dropped from 1268 in 1977 to 948 in 1979. Therefore the reduction in reported births could have been merely attributable to an overall decline in the female population at the school.

Finally, the study actually shows a drop in the teen birth rate rather than the teen pregnancy rate. The reduction in the fertility rate listed in the study was likely due to more teenagers obtaining an abortion.

Today, more and more advocates of school-based health clinics are citing a three-year study headed by Laurie Zabin at Johns Hopkins University, which evaluated the effect of sex education on teenagers. The study of two school-based clinics in Baltimore, Maryland showed there was a 30 percent reduction in teen pregnancies.

But even this study leaves many unanswered questions. The size of the sample was small and over 30 percent of the female

sample dropped out between the first and last measurement periods. Since the study did not control for student mobility, critics point out that some of girls who dropped out of the study may have dropped out of school because they were pregnant. And others were not accounted for with follow-up questionnaires. Other researchers point out that the word abortion is never mentioned in the brief report, leading them to conclude that only live births were counted.

The conclusion is simple. Even the best studies used to promote school-based health clinics prove they do not reduce the teen pregnancy rate. School-based clinics do not work.

Sex Education

For more than thirty years proponents of comprehensive sex education have argued that giving sexual information to young children and adolescents will reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In that effort nearly \$3 billion have been spent on federal Title X family planning services; yet teenage pregnancies and abortions rise.

Perhaps one of the most devastating popular critiques of comprehensive sex education came from Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. The journalist who said that Dan Quayle was right also was willing to say that sex education was wrong. Her article, "The Failure of Sex Education" in the October 1994 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, demonstrated that sex education neither reduced pregnancy nor slowed the spread of STDs.

Comprehensive sex education is mandated in at least seventeen states, so Whitehead chose one of those states and focused her analysis on the sex education experiment in New Jersey. Like other curricula, the New Jersey sex education program rests on certain questionable assumptions.

The first tenet is that *children are sexual from birth*. Sex educators reject the classic notion of a latency period until

approximately age twelve. They argue that you are “being sexual when you throw your arms around your grandpa and give him a hug.”

Second, *children are sexually miseducated*. Parents, to put it simply, have not done their job, so we need “professionals” to do it right. Parents try to protect their children, fail to affirm their sexuality, and even discuss sexuality in a context of moralizing. The media, they say, is also guilty of providing sexual misinformation.

Third, *if mis-education is the problem, then sex education in the schools is the solution*. Parents are failing miserably at the task, so “it is time to turn the job over to the schools. Schools occupy a safe middle ground between Mom and MTV.”

Learning about Family Life is the curriculum used in New Jersey. While it discusses such things as sexual desire, AIDS, divorce, condoms, and masturbation, it nearly ignores such issues as abstinence, marriage, self-control, and virginity. One technique promoted to prevent pregnancy and STDs is noncoital sex, or what some sex educators call “outercourse.” Yet there is good evidence to suggest that teaching teenagers to explore their sexuality through noncoital techniques will lead to coitus. Ultimately, outercourse will lead to intercourse.

Whitehead concludes that comprehensive sex education has been a failure. For example, the percent of teenage births to unwed mothers was 67 percent in 1980 and rose to 84 percent in 1991. In the place of this failed curriculum, Whitehead describes a better program. She found that “sex education works best when it combines clear messages about behavior with strong moral and logistical support for the behavior sought.” One example she cites is the “Postponing Sexual Involvement” program at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, which offers more than a “Just say no” message. It reinforces the message by having adolescents practice the desired behavior and enlists

the aid of older teenagers to teach younger teenagers how to resist sexual advances. Whitehead also found that “religiously observant teens” are less likely to experiment sexually, thus providing an opportunity for church- related programs to help stem the tide of teenage pregnancy.

Contrast this, however, with what has been derisively called “the condom gospel.” Sex educators today promote the dissemination of sex education information and the distribution of condoms to deal with the problems of teen pregnancy and STDs.

The Case Against Condoms

At the 1987 World Congress of Sexologists, Theresa Crenshaw asked the audience, “If you had the available partner of your dreams and knew that person carried HIV, how many of you would have sex, depending on a condom for your protection?” None of the 800 members of the audience raised their hand. If condoms do not eliminate the fear of HIV infection for sexologists and sex educators, why encourage the children of America to play STD Russian roulette?

Are condoms a safe and effective way to reduce pregnancy and STDs? Sex educators seem to think so. Every day sex education classes throughout this country promote condoms as a means of safe sex or at least safer sex. But the research on condoms provides no such guarantee.

For example, Texas researcher Susan Weller, writing in the 1993 issue of *Social Science Medicine*, evaluated all research published prior to July 1990 on condom effectiveness. She reported that condoms are only 87 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and 69 percent effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection. This 69 percent effectiveness rate is also the same as a 31 percent failure rate in preventing AIDS transmission. And according to a study in the 1992 *Family Planning Perspectives*, 15 percent of married couples who use

condoms for birth control end up with an unplanned pregnancy within the first year.

So why has condom distribution become the centerpiece of the U.S. AIDS policy and the most frequently promoted aspect of comprehensive sex education? For many years the answer to that question was an a priori commitment to condoms and a safe sex message over an abstinence message. But in recent years, sex educators and public health officials have been pointing to one study that seemed to vindicate the condom policy.

The study was presented at the Ninth International Conference on AIDS held in Berlin on June 9, 1993. The study involved 304 couples with one partner who was HIV positive. Of the 123 couples who used condoms with each act of sexual intercourse, not a single negative HIV partner became positive. So proponents of condom distribution thought they had scientific vindication for their views.

Unfortunately, that is not the whole story. Condoms do appear to be effective in stopping the spread of AIDS when used "correctly and consistently." Most individuals, however, do not use them "correctly and consistently." What happens to them? Well, it turns out that part of the study received much less attention. Of 122 couples who could not be taught to use condoms properly, 12 became HIV positive in both partners. Undoubtedly over time, even more partners would contract AIDS.

How well does this study apply to the general population? Not very well. This study group was quite dissimilar from the general population. For example, they knew the HIV status of their spouse and therefore had a vested interest in protecting themselves. They were responsible partners in a committed monogamous relationship. In essence, their actions and attitudes differed dramatically from teenagers and single adults who do not know the HIV status of their partners, are often reckless, and have multiple sexual partners.

And even if condoms are used correctly, do not break, and do not leak, they are still far from 100 percent effective. The Medical Institute for Sexual Health reported that “medical studies confirm that condoms do not offer much, if any, protection in the transmission of chlamydia and human papilloma virus, two serious STDs with prevalence as high as 40 percent among sexually active teenagers.”

Abstinence Is the Answer

Less than a decade ago an abstinence-only program was rare in the public schools. Today, directive abstinence programs can be found in many school districts while battles are fought in other school districts for their inclusion or removal. While proponents of abstinence programs run for school board or influence existing school board members, groups like Planned Parenthood bring lawsuits against districts that use abstinence-based curricula, arguing that they are inaccurate or incomplete.

The emergence of abstinence-only programs as an alternative to comprehensive sex education programs was due to both popularity and politics. Parents concerned about the ineffectiveness of the safe-sex message eagerly embraced the message of abstinence. And political funding helped spread the message and legitimize its educational value. The Adolescent Family Life Act, enacted in 1981 by the Reagan Administration, created Title XX and set aside \$2 million a year for the development and implementation of abstinence-based programs. Although the Clinton Administration later cut funding for abstinence programs, the earlier funding in the 1980s helped groups like Sex Respect and Teen-Aid launch abstinence programs in the schools.

Parents and children have embraced the abstinence message in significant numbers. One national poll by the University of Chicago found that 68 percent of adults surveyed said premarital sex among teenagers is “always wrong.” A 1994 poll

for USA Weekend asked more than 1200 teens and adults what they thought of “several high profile athletes [who] are saying in public that they have abstained from sex before marriage and are telling teens to do the same.” Seventy-two percent of the teens and 78 percent of the adults said they agree with the pro-abstinence message.

Their enthusiasm for abstinence-only education is well founded. Even though the abstinence message has been criticized by some as naive or inadequate, there are good reasons to promote abstinence in schools and society.

First, teenagers want to learn about abstinence. Contrary to the often repeated teenage claim, not “everyone’s doing it.” A 1992 study by the Centers for Disease Control found that 43 percent of teenagers from ages fourteen to seventeen had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once. Put another way, the latest surveys suggest that a majority of teenagers are not doing it.

A majority of teenagers are abstaining from sex; also more want help in staying sexually pure in a sex-saturated society. Emory University surveyed one thousand sexually experienced teen girls by asking them what they would like to learn to reduce teen pregnancy. Nearly 85 percent said, “How to say no without hurting the other person’s feelings.”

Second, abstinence prevents pregnancy. After the San Marcos (California) Junior High adopted the Teen-Aid abstinence-only program, the school’s pregnancy rate dropped from 147 to 20 in a two-year period.

An abstinence-only program for girls in Washington, D.C. has seen only one of four hundred girls become pregnant. Elayne Bennett, director of “Best Friends,” says that between twenty and seventy pregnancies are common for this age-group in the District of Columbia.

Nathan Hale Middle School near Chicago adopted the abstinence-

only program "Project Taking Charge" to combat its pregnancy rate among eighth-graders. Although adults were skeptical, the school graduated three pregnancy-free classes in a row.

Abstinence works. That is the message that needs to be spread to parents, teachers, and school boards. Teenagers will respond to this message, and we need to teach this message in the classroom.

Third, abstinence prevents sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). After more than three decades, the sexual revolution has taken lots of prisoners. Before 1960, doctors were concerned about only two STDs: syphilis and gonorrhea. Today there are more than twenty significant STDs, ranging from the relatively harmless to the fatal. Twelve million Americans are newly infected each year, and 63 percent of these new infections are in people under twenty-five years of age. Eighty percent of those infected with an STD have absolutely no symptoms.

Doctors warn that if a person has sexual intercourse with another individual, he or she is not only having sexual intercourse with that individual but with every person with whom that individual might have had intercourse for the last ten years and all the people with whom they had intercourse. If that is true, then consider the case of one sixteen-year-old girl who was responsible for 218 cases of gonorrhea and more than 300 cases of syphilis. According to the reporter, this illustrates the rampant transmission of STDs through multiple sex partners. "The girl has sex with sixteen men. Those men had sex with other people who had sex with other people. The number of contacts finally added up to 1,660." As one person interviewed in the story asked, "What if the girl had had AIDS instead of gonorrhea or syphilis? You probably would have had 1,000 dead people by now."

Abstinence prevents the spread of STDs while safe sex programs do not. Condoms are not always effective even when they are

used correctly and consistently, and most sexually active people do not even use them correctly and consistently. Sex education programs have begun to promote "outercourse" instead of intercourse, but many STDs can be spread even through this method, and, as stated, outercourse almost always leads to intercourse. Abstinence is the only way to prevent the spread of a sexually transmitted disease.

Fourth, abstinence prevents emotional scars. Abstinence speakers relate dozens and dozens of stories of young people who wish they had postponed sex until marriage. Sex is the most intimate form of bonding known to the human race, and it is a special gift to be given to one's spouse. Unfortunately, too many throw it away and are later filled with feelings of regret.

Surveys of young adults show that those who engaged in sexual activity regret their earlier promiscuity and wish they had been virgins on their wedding night. Even secular agencies that promote a safe-sex approach acknowledge that sex brings regrets. A Roper poll conducted in association with SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) of high schoolers found that 62 percent of the sexually experienced girls said they "should have waited."

Society is ready for the abstinence message, and it needs to be promoted widely. Anyone walking on the Washington Mall in July 1993 could not miss the acres of "True Love Waits" pledge cards signed by over 200,000 teenagers. The campaign, begun by the Southern Baptist Convention, provided a brief but vivid display of the desire by teenagers to stand for purity and promote abstinence. For every teenager who signed a card pledging abstinence, there are no doubt dozens of others who plan to do the same.

Teenagers want and need to hear the message of abstinence. They want to promote the message of abstinence. Their health, and even their lives, are at stake.

The Teen Sexual Revolution – Abstinence Programs Are The Only Biblical Response

Kerby Anderson considers the real problems created by the new American attitude extolling the virtues of teen sexual activity. He examines the effectiveness of various programs designed to stem the tide of teen sexual activity. He concludes the only reasonable approach is teaching the reasons for and benefits of abstinence prior to marriage.

One of the low points in television history occurred September 25, 1991. The program was “Doogie Howser, M.D.” This half-hour TV show, aimed at preteen and teenage kids, focused on the trials and tribulations of an 18-year-old child prodigy who graduated from medical school and was in the midst of medical practice. Most programs dealt with the problems of being a kid in an adult’s profession. But on September 25 the “problem” Doogie Howser confronted was the fact that he was still a virgin.

Advance publicity drove the audience numbers to unanticipated levels. Millions of parents, teenagers, and pajama-clad kids sat down in front of their televisions to watch Doogie Howser and his girlfriend Wanda deal with his “problem.” Twenty minutes into the program, they completed the act. Television ratings went through the roof. Parents and advertisers should have as well.

What is wrong with this picture? Each day approximately 7700 teenagers relinquish their virginity. In the process, many will become pregnant and many more will contract a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Already 1 in 4 Americans have an STD, and this percentage is increasing each year. Weren't the producers of "Doogie Howser, M.D." aware that teenage pregnancy and STDs are exploding in the population? Didn't they stop and think of the consequences of portraying virginity as a "problem" to be rectified? Why weren't parents and advertisers concerned about the message this program was sending?

Perhaps the answer is the trite, age-old refrain "everybody's doing it." Every television network and nearly every TV program deals with sensuality. Sooner or later the values of every other program were bound to show up on a TV program aimed at preteens and teenagers. In many ways the media is merely reflecting a culture that was transformed by a sexual revolution of values. Sexually liberal elites have hijacked our culture by seizing control of two major arenas. The first is the entertainment media (television, movies, rock music, MTV). The second is the area of sex education (sex education classes and school-based clinics). These two forces have transformed the social landscape of America and made promiscuity a virtue and virginity a "problem" to be solved.

The Teenage Sexuality Crisis

We face a teenage sexuality crisis in America. Consider these alarming statistics of children having children. A New York Times article reported: "Some studies indicate three-fourths of all girls have had sex during their teenage years and 15 percent have had four or more partners." A Lou Harris poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood discovered that 46 percent of 16-year-olds and 57 percent of 17-year-olds have had sexual intercourse.

Former Secretary of Education William Bennett in speaking to

the National School Board Association warned that “The statistics by which we measure how our children how our boys and girls are treating one another sexually are little short of staggering.” He found that more than one-half of America’s young people have had sexual intercourse by the time they are seventeen. He also found that more than one million teenage girls in the U.S. become pregnant each year. Of those who give birth, nearly half are not yet eighteen.

“These numbers,” William Bennett concluded, “are an irrefutable indictment of sex education’s effectiveness in reducing teenage sexual activity and pregnancies.” Moreover, these numbers are not skewed by impoverished, inner city youths from broken homes. One New York polling firm posed questions to 1300 students in 16 high schools in suburban areas in order to get a reading of “mainstream” adolescent attitudes. They discovered:

- *57% lost virginity in high school*
- *79% lost virginity by the end of college*
- *16.9 average age for sex*
- *33% of high school students had sex once a month to once a week*
- *52% of college students had sex once a month to once a week.*

Kids are trying sex at an earlier age than ever before. More than a third of 15-year-old boys have had sexual intercourse as have 27 percent of the 15-year-old girls. Among sexually active teenage girls, 61 percent have had multiple partners. The reasons for such early sexual experimentation are many.

Biology is one reason. Teenagers are maturing faster sexually due to better health and nutrition. Since the turn of the century, for example, the onset of menstruation in girls has dropped three months each decade. Consequently, urges that

used to arise in the mid-teens now explode in the early teens. Meanwhile the typical age of first marriage has risen more than four years since the 1950s.

A sex-saturated society is another reason. Sex is used to sell everything from cars to toothpaste. Sexual innuendos clutter most every TV program and movie. And explicit nudity and sensuality that used to be reserved for R-rated movies has found its way into the home through broadcast and cable television. Media researchers calculate that teenagers see approximately five hours of TV a day. This means that they see each year nearly 14,000 sexual encounters on television alone.

Lack of parental supervision and direction is a third reason. Working parents and reductions in after-school programs have left teenagers with less supervision and a looser after-school life. In the inner city, the scarcity of jobs and parents coupled with a cynical view of the future invites teenage promiscuity and its inevitable consequences. Adolescent boys in the suburbs trying to prove their masculinity, herd into groups like the infamous score-keeping Spur Posse gang in California.

Even when teenagers want to sit out the sexual revolution, they often get little help from parents who may be too embarrassed or intimidated to talk to their children. Parents, in fact, often lag behind their kids in sexual information. At one sex-education workshop held by Girls Inc. (formerly Girls Club of America), nearly half of the mothers had never seen a condom. Other mothers did not want to talk about sex because they were molested as children and were fearful of talking about sex with their daughters.

Teenagers are also getting mixed messages. In any given week, they are likely to hear contradictory messages. "No sex until you're married." "No sex unless you're older." "No sex unless you're protected." "No sex unless you're in love." No wonder adolescents are confused.

The Report Card on Sex Education

For more than thirty years proponents of comprehensive sex education have told us that giving sexual information to young children and adolescents will reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In that effort nearly \$3 billion has been spent on federal Title X family planning services, yet teenage pregnancies and abortions rise.

Perhaps one of the most devastating popular critiques of comprehensive sex education came from Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. The journalist who said that Dan Quayle was right also was willing to say that sex education was wrong. Her article in the October 1994 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "The Failure of Sex Education" demonstrated that sex education neither reduced pregnancy nor slowed the spread of STDs.

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The first tenet is that children are "sexual from birth." Sex educators reject the classic notion of a latency period until approximately age twelve. They argue that you are "being sexual when you throw your arms around your grandpa and give him a hug."

Second, sex educators hold that children are sexually miseducated. Parents, in their view, have simply not done their job, so we need "professionals" to do it right. Parents try to protect their children, fail to affirm their sexuality, and even discuss sexuality in a context of moralizing. The media, they say, is also guilty of providing sexual misinformation.

Third, if miseducation is the problem, then sex education in

the schools is the solution. Parents are failing miserably at the task, so “it is time to turn the job over to the schools. Schools occupy a safe middle ground between Mom and MTV.”

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Whitehead concludes that comprehensive sex education has been a failure. For example, the percent of teenage births to unwed mothers was 67 percent in 1980 and rose to 84 percent in 1991. In the place of this failed curriculum, Whitehead describes a better program. She found that “sex education works best when it combines clear messages about behavior with strong moral and logistical support for the behavior sought.” One example she cites is the *Postponing Sexual Involvement* program at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, which offers more than a “Just Say No” message. It reinforces the message by having adolescents practice the desired behavior and enlists the aid of older teenagers to teach younger teenagers how to resist sexual advances. Whitehead also found that “religiously observant teens” are less likely to experiment sexually, thus providing an opportunity for church-related programs to stem the tide of teenage pregnancy. The results of Whitehead’s research are clear: abstinence is still the best form of sex education.

Is “Safe Sex” Really Safe?

At the 1987 World Congress of Sexologists, Theresa Crenshaw asked the audience, “If you had the available partner of your

dreams and knew that person carried HIV, how many of you would have sex depending on a condom for your protection?" When they were asked for a show of hands, none of the 800 members of the audience indicated that they would trust the condoms. If condoms do not eliminate the fear of HIV-infection for sexologists and sex educators, why do we encourage the children of America to play STD Russian Roulette?

Are condoms a safe and effective way to reduce pregnancy and STDs? To listen to sex educators you would think so. Every day sex education classes throughout this country promote condoms as a means of safe sex or at least safer sex. But the research on condoms provides no such guarantee.

For example, Texas researcher Susan Weller writing in the 1993 issue of *Social Science Medicine*, evaluated all research published prior to July 1990 on condom effectiveness. She reported that condoms are only 87 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and 69 percent effective in reducing the risk of HIV infection. This translates into a 31 failure rate in preventing AIDS transmission. And according to a study in the 1992 *Family Planning Perspectives*, 15 percent of married couples who use condoms for birth control end up with an unplanned pregnancy within the first year.

So why has condom distribution become the centerpiece of the U.S. AIDS policy and the most frequently promoted aspect of comprehensive sex education? For many years, the answer to that question was an a priori commitment to condoms and a safe sex message over an abstinence message. But in recent years, sex educators and public health officials have been pointing to one study which appeared to vindicate the condom policy.

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Unfortunately that is not the whole story. Condoms do appear to be effective in stopping the spread of AIDS when used “correctly and consistently.” Most individuals, however, do not use them “correctly and consistently.” What happens to them? Well, it turns out that part of the study received much less attention. Of 122 couples who could not be taught to use condoms properly, 12 became HIV positive in both partners. Undoubtably over time, even more partners would contract AIDS.

How well does this study apply to the general population? I would argue the couples in the study group were quite dissimilar from the general population. For example, they knew the HIV status of their spouse and therefore had a vested interest in protecting themselves. They were responsible partners and in a committed monogamous relationship. In essence, their actions and attitudes differ dramatically from teenagers and single adults who do not know the HIV status of their partners, are often reckless, and have multiple sexual partners.

Contrary to popular belief, condoms are not as reliable as public health pronouncements might lead you to think. Abstinence is still the only safe sex.

Only Abstinence-Only Programs Really Work

Less than a decade ago, an abstinence-only program was rare in the public schools. Today directive abstinence programs can be found in many school districts while battles are fought in other school districts for their inclusion or removal. While proponents of abstinence programs run for school board or influence existing school board members, groups like Planned Parenthood bring lawsuits against districts that use abstinence-based curricula arguing that they are inaccurate or incomplete. At least a dozen abstinence-based curricula are

on the market, with the largest being *Sex Respect* (Bradley, Illinois) and *Teen-Aid* (Spokane, Washington).

The emergence of abstinence-only programs as an alternative to comprehensive sex education programs was due to both popularity and politics. Parents concerned about the ineffectiveness of the safe sex message eagerly embraced the message of abstinence. And political funding helped spread the message and legitimize its educational value. The Adolescent Family Life Act enacted in 1981 by the Reagan Administration created Title XX and set aside \$2 million a year for the development and implementation of abstinence-based programs. Although the Clinton Administration later cut funding for abstinence programs, the earlier funding in the 1980s helped groups like *Sex Respect* and *Teen-Aid* launch abstinence programs in the schools.

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Their enthusiasm for abstinence-only education is well founded. Even though the abstinence message has been criticized by some as naive or inadequate, there are good reasons to promote abstinence in schools and society.

1. Teenagers want to learn about abstinence. Contrary to the often repeated teenage claim, not “everyone’s doing it.” A 1992 study by the Centers for Disease Control found that 43 percent of teenagers (age 14 to 17) had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once. Put another way, the latest surveys

suggest that a majority of teenagers are not doing it.

2. Abstinence prevents pregnancy. Proponents of abstinence-only programs argue that it will significantly lower the teenage pregnancy rate and cited lots of anecdotes and statistics to make their case. For example, the San Marcos Junior High in San Marcos, California, adopted an abstinence-only program developed by Teen- Aid. The curriculum dropped the school's pregnancy rate from 147 to 20 within a two-year period. An abstinence-only program for girls in Washington, D.C., has seen only one of 400 girls become pregnant.

3. Abstinence prevents sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). After more than three decades, the sexual revolution has taken lots of prisoners. Before 1960 there were only two STDs that doctors were concerned about: syphilis and gonorrhea. Today, there are more than 20 significant STDs ranging from the relatively harmless to the fatal. Twelve million Americans are newly infected each year, and 63 percent of these new infections are in people less than 25 years old. Eighty percent of those infected with an STD have absolutely no symptoms.

The conclusion is simple: abstinence is the only truly safe sex.

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