



### ***On Our Side: Public Support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education***

A vast majority of adults support comprehensive sexuality education—medically accurate, age-appropriate education that includes information about both contraception and abstinence—and believe young people should be given information about how to protect themselves from unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In fact, only 7% of the voting public say they do not want sexuality education to be taught at all as part of school curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

#### **National surveys of adults demonstrate overwhelming public support for comprehensive sexuality education in American schools:**

- 93% of parents of junior high school students and 91% of parents of high school students believe it is very or somewhat important to have sexuality education as part of the school curriculum. In contrast, only 4% of parents of junior high school students and 6% of parents of high school students believe sexuality education should not be taught in school.<sup>2</sup>
- 95% of parents of junior high school students and 93% of parents of high school students believe that birth control and other methods of preventing pregnancy are appropriate topics for sexuality education programs in schools.<sup>3</sup>
- 88% of parents of junior high school students and 85% of parents of high school students believe information on how to use and where to get contraceptives is an appropriate topic for sexuality education programs in schools.<sup>4</sup>
- 83% of parents of junior high school students and 79% of parents of high school students believe information on how to put on a condom is an appropriate topic for sexuality education programs in schools.<sup>5</sup>
- 72% of parents of junior high school students and 65% of parents of high school students stated that federal government funding “should be used to fund more comprehensive sex education programs that include information on how to obtain and use condoms and other contraceptives” instead of funding programs that have “abstaining from sexual activity” as their only purpose.<sup>6</sup>
- More than 6 in 10 voters would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports comprehensive sexuality education.<sup>7</sup>

#### **State surveys from across the country demonstrate overwhelming support for comprehensive sexuality education:**

- 97% of parents in Washington State support sexuality education for high school students, and 87% of Washington’s parents believe teens should receive information on sex and sexuality over the claim that sex education encourages sexual activity among teens.<sup>8</sup>
- 90% of adults in Texas favor teaching sex education that includes information about contraceptive methods, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, and abstinence.<sup>9</sup>
- 83% of Illinois voters agree that students in Illinois should have information about contraception and disease prevention, and that age-appropriate facts about pregnancy and STDs are an important part of all sex education programs.

- 81% of registered voters in South Carolina support sexuality education containing information on contraception and abstinence.<sup>10</sup>

### **Americans strongly support including a wide breadth of topics in sexuality education:<sup>11</sup>**

- 100% of parents of junior high school students and 99% of parents of high school students believe HIV/AIDS is an appropriate topic for sexuality education programs in schools.
- 100% of parents of junior high school students and 98% of parents of high school students believe sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS, such as Herpes, are appropriate topics for sexuality education programs in schools.
- 99% of parents of junior high school students and 97% of parents of high school students believe the basics of how babies are made, pregnancy, and birth are appropriate topics for sexuality education programs in schools.
- 97% of parents of junior high school students and 96% of parents of high school students believe information on how to get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases is an appropriate topic for sexuality education programs in schools.
- 80% of parents of junior high school students and 73% of parents of high school students believe homosexuality and sexual orientation are appropriate topics for sexuality education programs in schools.
- 71% of parents of junior high school students and 73% of parents of high school students believe informing teens that they can obtain birth control pills from family planning clinics and doctors without permission from a parent is an appropriate topic for sexuality education programs in schools.

### **Broad public support for comprehensive sexuality curricula is found across ideological and religious lines:**

- Over four in five anti-choice voters agree that students should receive age-appropriate, medically accurate sexuality education, beginning in the early grades and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>12</sup>
- Almost nine in ten self-described Evangelical or born-again Christians support sexuality education being taught in schools.<sup>13</sup>
- More than 13 faith-based organizations are members of the National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education, including the American Jewish Congress, the Office of Family Ministries and Human Sexuality of the National Council of Churches of Christ, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association of the USA. (See the full list of over 140 supporting organizations at [www.ncsse.org](http://www.ncsse.org).)

<sup>1</sup> *Sex Education in America: General Public/Parents Survey*. (Washington, DC: National Public Radio, Kaiser Family Foundation, Kennedy School of Government, 2004), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Mobilizing Support for Sex Education: New Messages and Techniques* (New York, NY: The Othmer Institute of Planned Parenthood of NYC, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> *Sexual Health Education Poll of Washington State Parents and Voters*, (Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> *August Scripps Howard Texas Poll* (Texas: Scripps Howard, August 9-26, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> *South Carolina Speaks 2004* (South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> *Sex Education in America*, 9-13.

<sup>12</sup> *Mobilizing Support for Sex Education: New Messages and Techniques*.

<sup>13</sup> *Sex Education in America*, Table 3