

Sex Education: What Kind? Who Pays? What's the Result?

By Kate Knable

Summary: The Bush administration promoted federally-funded abstinence education as an alternative to so-called “comprehensive sex education,” the norm in public schools for nearly 50 years. But the abstinence policy is under relentless attack by progressive sex education advocacy groups. The Obama administration now proposes to de-fund abstinence education and divert the funding to “fact-based” sex ed.

When Congress passed the landmark welfare reform act in 1996, it attached a provision to the legislation providing \$50 million per year for grants to the states to develop sex education programs promoting abstinence outside marriage. That provision expired on June 30. During the 13 years of its existence, the program created and sustained abstinence education programs that were developed by nonprofit groups and health agencies and administered by public school districts across America.

The Obama administration saw fit to eliminate this program from the president's fiscal year 2010 budget. It also wants to get rid of a larger program begun in 2000, the Community-Based Abstinence Education Program (CBAE), which provided \$92.9 million in grants to 167 public, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations in 2007, according to recent information from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Federal abstinence program funding totaled \$176 million in 2008. Like its treatment of the federally-funded school voucher program for District of Columbia students (see CRC's July *Labor Watch*), the Obama administration wants to kill the funding and forget the programs ever existed.



Dr. Timothy J. Dailey of the Family Research Council says abstinence-until-marriage programs are needed to combat the rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

Public school sex education is once again in the news. Besides the intense media exposure given to celebrity teen mothers like Bristol Palin and Jamie Lynn Spears (sister of Britney), Americans are increasingly aware that teen pregnancy is once again on the rise. According to recent studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of girls aged 15 to 19 who gave birth in 2006 rose 3% over the previous year, the largest increase in the number of teen births in over a decade.

While no one can say for sure what's behind the increase in teen births—as well as the growing number of teens who have sexually transmitted diseases—there is no shortage of finger-pointing. Many people blame public

school sex education for failing to halt the trend. But what kind of sex education are students receiving? This is the issue that is dividing parents and educators. One side argues for expanding abstinence-only programs, while the other demands more sex education in which contraceptive and condom use are emphasized to prevent disease and unwanted pregnancy. Supporters of the second approach like to refer to these programs as “comprehensive sex education.”

Sex Ed by the Numbers

Ironically, the federal government seems to have no idea what works best—and so it has funded both types of sex education. In 1981 President Reagan signed the Adolescent Family Life Act, which made a small amount of money available for teen pregnancy pilot programs that taught “chastity and self-discipline.” But funding earmarked specifically for abstinence education has only been in effect for the last 13 years. Federal funding for comprehensive or contraceptive-focused sex education has

December 2009

CONTENTS

Sex Education
Page 1

Kathleen Sullivan Interview
Page 3

Briefly Noted
Page 6

Organization Trends

been around much longer and is funded at much higher levels. According to a report from HHS, federal abstinence education programs received \$1 for every \$4 spent on contraceptive-focused sex ed.

It's difficult to follow the money because there is no one federal program or funding source specifically dedicated to contraceptive-focused sex education in schools. President Bush's HHS secretary Michael Leavitt estimated that in fiscal 2008 the federal government spent more than \$785 million on teen sex issues: \$300 million for pregnancy and disease prevention programs, \$309 million for what are called "family planning services," and \$176 million on abstinence education. (Total family planning services spending was almost \$2 billion.) It's estimated that about two-thirds of U.S. public schools teach sex ed, and most have programs that are *not* abstinence-centered. According to the National Abstinence Education Association, about 68% of American schools have "comprehensive sex education" programs, while no more than 25% of public schools teach abstinence only.

Most schools with comprehensive sex ed programs are recipients of federal taxpayer funding, observes Heritage Foundation policy analyst Christine Kim. These programs also receive state education dollars

Editor: Matthew Vadum

Publisher: Terrence Scanlon

Organization Trends

is published by Capital Research Center, a non-partisan education and research organization, classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Address:
1513 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1480

Phone: (202) 483-6900
Long-Distance: (800) 459-3950

E-mail Address:
mvadum@capitalresearch.org

Web Site:
<http://www.capitalresearch.org>

Organization Trends welcomes letters to the editor.

Reprints are available for \$2.50 prepaid to Capital Research Center.

that go to sex ed when the curriculum is included in health classes. Unfortunately, there is little transparency about government sex-ed funding. Kim says "it's hard to know exactly" how much tax money goes toward school comprehensive sex-ed every year. Inexact definitions and vague explanations for contraceptive promotion and pregnancy prevention funding seem designed to frustrate inquiry.

When he proposed to terminate \$50 million in abstinence funding, President Obama insisted that \$50 million be included in his fiscal year 2010 budget for new and unspecified "evidence-based" teen pregnancy prevention. In Congress, Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-New Jersey) and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-California) introduced a bill called the Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act. Their REAL bill provides \$50 million in federal funds for comprehensive sex education programs and it encourages the states to provide additional funding. By contrast, the Senate Finance Committee voted to restore the \$50 million in abstinence-only education, adding it to the health care bill. Democrats Kent Conrad (North Dakota) and Blanche Lincoln (Arkansas) joined all 10 Republicans to overturn the Obama decision.

What Kind of Sex Ed?

The current debate assumes that teen sex is a national problem and that it is the responsibility of the federal government to address it by providing taxpayer funding for sexual education. But what kind of sex ed?

"Comprehensive sex education" is sometimes deceptively called "abstinence-plus education." However, a 2007 review commissioned by HHS to "evaluate comprehensive sex education programs supported with federal dollars" found that such programs "focus on contraception and ways to lessen risks of sexual activity, although abstinence is at times a non-trivial component." Oddly, HHS did not select the curricula it chose to review based on which materials were used most often in public schools. Instead, the criteria for selection was the "frequency and strength of endorsement" given them. In an introduction the review makes a disclaimer that states: "After a thorough search...a list [of curricula] ranked by 'frequency of use' or 'number of copies purchased' was not in existence nor could one be produced."

Apparently, the agency that funds comprehensive sex ed programs can't find out who uses of them.

The HHS review shows that the most highly endorsed comprehensive sex ed curricula for junior high and high school students typically offer demonstrations of condom use. They also suggest how to obtain contraceptives, and they describe ways to have "safe sex." Some programs include discussion questions about sexual fantasies. Some recommend masturbation as a healthy expression of one's sexuality. Others explain vaginal intercourse, anal and oral sex, explore sexual orientation, and suggest abortion to terminate an undesirable pregnancy.

Consider, for instance, the instructions for an in-class activity from Planned Parenthood's curriculum titled *Positive Images*. It recommends that the teacher should have a student explain correct condom usage with the aid of a model of a penis. According to the curricula review, the class should organize cards detailing "each step in condom use." An "A" for the student who puts the cards in the correct order: "Sexual Arousal, Erection, Leave Room at the Tip, Roll Condom On, Intercourse, Orgasm/Ejaculation, Hold Onto Rim, Withdraw the Penis, Loss of Erection, Relaxation."

Another curriculum, *Be Proud! Be Responsible*, is part of Advocates for Youth's 2008 list of "Programs that Work." It targets 13- to-19 year-olds. The curriculum recommends "showering together" as a safe sexual activity. The curriculum also suggests to students, "Once you and a partner agree to use condoms, do something positive and fun. Go to the store together. Buy lots of different brands and colors. Plan a special day when you can experiment. Just talking about how you'll use all of those condoms can be a turn on."

The curriculum *Teen Talk*, produced by the Program Archive on Sexuality, Health and Adolescence (PASHA), is a resource established with funds from the U.S. Office of Population Affairs (OPA). Its "prevention programs in a box" contain manuals, student workbooks, videos and board games. *Teen Talk* calls abortion a "fairly simple" alternative to carrying an unwanted baby.

Compare them to abstinence education curricula. For instance, for seven years the Pregnancy Care Center of Springfield, Missouri, received federal funding for abstinence education classes taught in 11 public schools in the Springfield area. Jay Briggs, Choices project director, and another abstinence teacher from the Care Center went into 6th through 12th grade classrooms each year. For eight days they taught from a curriculum called *Choosing the Best*, which supplemented the schools' regular health classes. Briggs said in an interview that the curriculum is video-based and that his daily abstinence class routine includes showing a video, leading a discussion based on the video and a workbook, and sending the students home with questions that they must ask their parents to answer. Briggs said that one of the major goals of the curriculum is to show the long-term "emotional impact" of sex.

Abstinence education curricula assert that abstaining from sex is sure to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. They emphasize the difference between love and lust, and argue for the benefits of monogamous marriage. Kelly Wilson et al. in *The Journal of School Health* observes, "Those who develop abstinence education curricula value nonsexual antecedents of sexual behavior such as skills (goal setting, decision making, and assertiveness), ideals (fidelity, friendships), and psychological factors such as self-esteem." Rather than discuss ways to have safe sex or demonstrate how to use contraceptives, abstinence-only curricula suggests ways to avoid sexual encounters and resist pressure to have sex in dating relationships.

The Sex-Ed Wars

Supporters of comprehensive sex education look to four nonprofit groups for vocal and organized advocacy. Three are 501(c)(3) public charities: Advocates for Youth, Planned Parenthood Federation of American, and the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). One is a 501(c)(4) lobby organization: NARAL Pro-Choice America. Planned Parenthood also has created the 501(c)(4) Planned Parenthood Action Center.

SIECUS and Planned Parenthood both re-

(continued on page 4)

INTERVIEW WITH AN ABSTINENCE EDUCATION PIONEER



Kathleen M. Sullivan, a pioneer in the abstinence education movement, believes the movement she helped to found is holding its own in the battle with abstinence opponents such as Planned Parenthood.

"The powers that depend on promiscuity for their existence tried to wipe the movement out," Sullivan said in an interview. She said those forces have slapped the label of "abstinence-only education" on the programs Sullivan supports. They are trying to make authentic abstinence education sound unappealing, she says. At the same time they call their own programs "comprehensive sex education," she adds.

Sullivan helped to write the Adolescent Family Life Act in 1982 and helped to implement the landmark welfare reform legislation that President Clinton signed in 1995. She also founded Project Reality in 1985, an abstinence education program that was originally run out of Chicago. Since last year the program has been administered by the Abstinence & Marriage Education Partnership, a nonprofit.

"In spite of the numerous obstacles presented by the current administration in Washington, abstinence education has taken on a life of its own," Sullivan said.

The many programs across the nation that are funded by county, state, and local entities, have a proven record of success.

"Young people in the classrooms appreciate and are listening to this good health message," she said. "It will continue in spite of these obstacles, and the providers of abstinence education are confident that it will be expanded again in the near future."

For more information, visit the website of Abstinence & Marriage Education Partnership at <http://www.ampartnership.org>.

(continued from page 3)

ceive federal government grants, but their grants are not designated expressly for sex education. According to its most recent annual financial report, Planned Parenthood received \$349.6 million in federal grants and contracts during its fiscal year ending June 30, 2008. Planned Parenthood is well-known as a major provider of reproductive health services, including contraceptives and abortions.

SIECUS states that it “has a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Adolescent and School Health to provide technical assistance and support to state and local education agencies on their HIV-prevention efforts.” The group’s annual financial report lists government grants as 10% of its income. That 10% amounted to \$250,730 in 2008.

While it accepts taxpayer support, SIECUS has two websites (www.communityactionkit.org and www.nomoremoney.org) that offer instruction in how to oppose abstinence education programs while promoting comprehensive sex education.

The groups use the same language to describe the sex ed programs they endorse.

Planned Parenthood explains that its program is “*comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate information... about abstinence as well as contraception, and how to avoid sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV/AIDS.*”

SIECUS states that “*A comprehensive sexuality program will provide medically accurate information, recognize the diversity of values and beliefs represented in the community, and complement and augment the sexuality education children receive from their families, religious and community groups, and healthcare professionals.*” On its Community Action Kit website, SIECUS further defines comprehensive sex ed as “*Sexuality education programs that start in kindergarten and continue through 12th grade.*”

Advocates for Youth says its program “*addresses both abstinence and age-*

appropriate, medically accurate information about contraception [and...] is also developmentally appropriate, introducing information on relationships, decision-making, assertiveness, and skill building to resist social/peer pressure, depending on grade-level.”

NARAL Pro-Choice America defines comprehensive sex education as “*honest, age-appropriate, and medically accurate sex education that promotes abstinence and provides young people with the information they need to protect themselves.*” The NARAL website says sex ed includes information about sexually transmitted diseases and contraceptives.

The organizations argue that helping teens requires the termination of “failed abstinence-only programs.” For example, Planned Parenthood’s website boasts that the organization is “Fighting for Real Sex Ed” and explains, “American teens need to know how to make responsible decisions and stay healthy. The best way to help them is to give

them comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education.”

Joseph DiNorcia, president and CEO of SIECUS, declares that abstinence education funds have been “squandered on programs... that we know do not work and that undermine our attempts to raise healthy and responsible young people.”

Supporters of abstinence-only education such as the 501(c)(3) groups Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, and the Heritage Foundation, and the 501(c)(4) National Abstinence Education Association (NAEA) respond by insisting that promiscuity lowers the quality of life of teens who indulge in it. They argue that comprehensive sex ed has failed teens.

Timothy Dailey, a senior fellow at the Family Research Council notes: “Every year there are an estimated 15 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases, half of which are incurable.... Sexually active girls are nearly three times more likely to be depressed or to

Science and Sex Education

Miriam Grossman is a board certified child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist who counsels patients in Los Angeles. In her newly published book, *You’re Teaching My Child What?* (Regnery), written when she was a senior fellow at the Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute, Grossman describes the reality of physical disease and psychological illness ignored by advocates of comprehensive sex education:

I contend that it’s ‘comprehensive sexuality education’ that’s animated by pseudoscience and crackpot ideology. Sexuality educators charge their opposition with censoring medically accurate up to date science and argue that kids need more than a ‘plumbing lesson.’ But the sex ed industry is no less guilty of using science selectively and omitting facts that contradict their agendas. It’s time to call foul.

SIECUS and Planned Parenthood have yet to recognize some of the most compelling research of recent years. These organizations are still animated by the philosophies of the infamous sexologist Alfred Kinsey—whose work has been debunked—the birth control and eugenics advocate Margaret Sanger, the feminist Gloria Steinem, and Playboy founder Hugh Hefner. These twentieth-century crusaders were passionate about social change, not health. Their goal was a cultural revolution, not the eradication of disease. And the same is true for the sex ed industry. That’s why their premises haven’t changed in fifty years, even as journals like *Neuropsychiatry* and *The New England Journal of Medicine* have filled with research contradicting them.

attempt suicide [and] sexually active boys are twice as likely to be depressed and eight times more likely to attempt suicide.”

FRC’s Dailey notes, “The good news is that today there are more than 1,000 abstinence-until-marriage programs around the country.” The Heritage Foundation’s Melissa Pardue cites a study published in the journal *Adolescent & Family Health* showing that young girls who participated in an abstinence education program used in 100 schools across the U.S. were less likely to participate in risky behaviors. Pardue explains that the girls were “Six-and-a-half times more likely to remain sexually abstinent; [n]early two times more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol; [e]ight times more likely to abstain from drug use; and [o]ver two times more likely to refrain from smoking.” Heritage policy analysts Christine Kim and Robert Rector conclude, “Studies have shown that abstinent teens report, on average, better psychological well-being and higher academic achievement than those who are sexually active.” (“Abstinence Education: Assessing the Evidence,” by Christine Kim and Robert Rector, Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder #2126, April 22, 2008, available online at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Welfare/bg2126.cfm>)

While both sides of the sex ed debate cite studies and statistics for their positions, it’s clear that abstinence education has been on the defensive. Abstinence education in public schools has received direct federal funding for only 13 years and while the amounts have increased substantially during the Bush presidency, they still badly trail funding for comprehensive sex ed.

Supporters of comprehensive sex education like to claim that their cause is in desperate need of funding. They say there are no federal funds specifically allocated to comprehensive sex ed, even though their programs have received lavish funding since the 1970s, drawing upon state education funds, federal family planning dollars, and government and private foundation programs dedicated to the fight against teen pregnancy.

SIECUS, in particular, calls for expanding comprehensive sex ed programs to children in kindergarten! According to its website, SIECUS promotes comprehensive sex ed

and other “sexuality related issues” through its public policy office in Washington, D.C., a community advocacy project, media outreach, publications, and its websites. SIECUS claims that one of its publications, *Guidelines for Comprehensive Education: Kindergarten – 12th Grade*, has been “hailed as a major breakthrough in sexuality education.”

What Do We Want Our Schools to Teach Our Children?

Comprehensive sex education has not noticeably curbed the rise in teen pregnancy, teen abortions, teen births, and sexually transmitted diseases during the last 50 years. Heritage’s Kim argues that the first notable drop in teen pregnancies came in the late 1990s, as abstinence-only education was implemented courtesy of federal dollars. But she acknowledges that the connection is unclear because most abstinence programs have existed for little more than a decade and there has been inadequate research into their effectiveness.

The most recent study issued on Nov. 6 by a panel that reviewed 83 studies conducted between 1980 and 2007 argued that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that abstinence programs work. However, dissenters on the panel disputed the report and argued that the evidence shows that comprehensive sex ed programs do not increase condom use, reduce teen pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

As a matter of basic biology, abstinence works, when practiced. However, if abstinence education programs are de-funded by the Obama administration, American public schools will have to rely on comprehensive sex-ed to control the lusts and longings of teenagers. Any further opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the two approaches will be lost.

The organizations promoting comprehensive sex ed ignore their own past failures. More importantly, they refuse to acknowledge the conflict of values that is at the heart of the policy debate. According to a 2007 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than half of all high school students are abstinent.

Masking comprehensive sex education’s

mixed results behind words like “more effective” and “medically accurate” obscures the real issue: What do we want our schools to teach our children? More importantly, who should be teaching American children their values? Parents have been the primary influence on their children’s moral values. If sex education is to be taught in school because parents aren’t combating teen pregnancy and STDs vigorously enough—at least they should have a choice in the form of sex ed their children receive.

The state of North Carolina offers a possible model for a national sex ed policy. Last April, the committee on health in the North Carolina House of Representatives approved a sex education plan that would allow parents to choose between abstinence-only education, comprehensive sex education, or no sex ed at all. Unfortunately, lawmakers subsequently amended the plan to shrink the three options down to one choice: the choice was a mandatory “abstinence-plus” education program that, like “comprehensive sex ed,” emphasizes contraceptive use while mentioning abstinence.

Kate Knable, a recent graduate of Cedarville University in Ohio, was a 2009 Haller intern at Capital Research Center.

OT

Please consider contributing early in this calendar year to the Capital Research Center.

We need your help in the current difficult economic climate to continue our important research.

Your contribution to advance our watchdog work is deeply appreciated.

Many thanks.

Terrence Scanlon
President

Briefly Noted

Radical philanthropist **George Soros** plans to ramp up his war on markets worldwide by creating an “Institute for New Economic Thinking” (INET) at England’s Cambridge University next year. Soros plans to shell out \$50 million for INET and hopes matching funds will push the total endowment to \$200 million. Newsweek’s Michael Hirsh wrote INET will “make research grants, convene symposiums, and establish a journal, all in an effort to take back the economics profession from the champions of free-market zealotry who have dominated it for decades, and to correct the failures of decades of market deregulation.”

ACORN and its affiliates currently owe more than \$2.3 million in long overdue back taxes to all levels of government. As of Nov. 11 the exact figure was \$2,328,596.95. ACORN owes money to the IRS, Arkansas, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and to the cities of New York and Philadelphia.

The **American Legislative Exchange Council** (ALEC), the nation’s largest non-partisan, individual membership association of state legislators, said it has identified several states which continue to provide funding for ACORN and its affiliates, including New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Illinois. In response, ALEC’s members have passed a resolution calling on all states to conduct audits to identify and immediately end all funding to ACORN and its affiliates.

An ACORN supporter could soon be on the federal bench. **David Hamilton**, President **Obama**’s nominee for the Seventh Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, once worked as an ACORN fundraiser, the **Judicial Confirmation Network** reports.

An **Organizing for America** volunteer named **Cheryl Johner** allegedly punched Tea Party activist **Kelly Owens** in the face outside a town hall meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. Prosecutors have done nothing to advance the case in the three months since the assault happened. St. Louis prosecutors also sat on their hands for months regarding the summertime attack on conservative activist **Kenneth Gladney** by purple shirt-wearing **SEIU** goons. Gladney was handing out “Don’t tread on me” flags outside a healthcare town hall meeting. No charges have been pursued in that case either.

The **National Education Association** actually recommends **Saul Alinsky**’s books. On its website NEA approvingly quotes the Marxist founder of community organizing saying, “Radicals precipitate the social crisis by action - by using power. Liberals may then timidly follow along or else, as in most cases, be swept forward along the course set by Radicals...”

No wonder **Al Gore** is terrified of publicly debating the science of global warming and climate change. He’s got billions of dollars in potential personal worth on the line. Even the New York Times has finally noticed how much Gore has at stake. “[F]ew have put as much money behind their advocacy as Mr. Gore and are as well positioned to profit from this green transformation, if and when it comes.” We noticed Gore’s conflict of interest years ago. (See *Foundation Watch*, August 2008 and August 2007.) Gore uses nonprofits, such as his own group the **Alliance for Climate Protection**, to advance his agenda.

Movie star **Heather Graham** is now appearing in **MoveOn.org** propaganda pushing the big government healthcare option. The TV ad depicts a footrace between runners representing various insurance companies and promotes the myth that the so-called “public option” will promote competition in the health insurance industry. Of course, allowing the federal government to offer health insurance will necessarily drive all private insurers out of business, which is precisely the goal as its most left-wing supporters freely admit.