

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

New Study Supports Abstinence-focused Sexual Education, 02/04/2010

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/health/jan-june10/abstinence_02-04.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

Student Worksheet (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. How do science and scientific studies inform laws and public policy?

2. If lawmakers wanted to test if abstinence-only sexual education worked, how would they structure a study?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – **Student Worksheet**

1. How might the new study of abstinence-focused sexual education programs affect President Obama's budget?

ANSWER

The findings could influence President Obama's decision about how to spend money allotted for pregnancy-prevention programs.

Obama administration officials said a program like the one implemented in the study could be eligible for federal funding. That would change the nature of an ongoing political debate about the value of abstinence-focused education.

2. Who is Dr. John Jemmott?

ANSWER

The study, led by Dr. John Jemmott of the University of Pennsylvania, evaluated 662 African-American students in the sixth and seventh grades, all of them from four low-income schools.

3. What are the different types of sexual education tested in Jemmott's study?

ANSWER

The first group had eight hours of sexual education that focused on delaying sex, the second group had an eight-hour program focused on safe sex practices and a third group had an eight- or 12-hour curriculum that incorporated both sets of information. The fourth group of students, a control group, studied healthy lifestyle choices like exercise and nutrition, but received no sexual education.

4. What percentage of those in the class emphasizing abstinence began having sex? What percentage of the control group began having sex?

ANSWER

At the end of the two-year study, 48.5 percent of those in the control group began having sex, compared to 33.5 percent in the classes emphasizing abstinence. Of the students in the class teaching safe sex, 52 percent became sexually active, as opposed to 42 percent of students in the comprehensive program.

5. What does the Jemmott study say about whether the abstinence-focused approach will protect students against infections?

ANSWER

The Jemmott study did not record whether participants contracted disease or became pregnant.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

- 1. Do you think the Jemmott study should affect President Obama's funding of pregnancy-prevention programs? Why or why not?**
- 2. Where do you stand on the debate between Valerie Huber of the National Abstinence Education Association and Sarah Brown of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy?**
- 3. Why might one school district want to teach contraception while another might want to teach that everyone should wait till they are married to have sex?**
- 4. How do celebrities, movies and television affect your thinking about whether teenagers should be having sex?**
- 5. How can you tell whether a scientific study is valid or not? Why do different people interpret the results differently?**

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.