



# Effective Health Education: Supporting Students' Well-Being

Decades of rigorous research is conclusive—complete, honest, inclusive health education supports students' well-being. Communities have the responsibility to provide young people with complete, honest, age-appropriate health education. Young people need access to medically-accurate, science-based health information to protect their health and plan for their futures.<sup>2</sup>

## Effective, science-based health education improves health outcomes of young people by:

- Delaying the age of first sexual intercourse;
- → Reducing unprotected sex and increasing use of condoms and contraception;
- Reducing unintended pregnancy; and
- Reducing rates of HIV and other STDs/STIs.

NEBRASKA ADOLESCENT
SEXUAL HEALTH
LANDSCAPE<sup>4</sup>

# EFFECTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION IS:

Age-Appropriate Medically Accurate



Science Based



Trauma-Informed



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LGBTQ-Inclusive Suicide Prevention<sup>3</sup>



Dating Violence Prevention



Bullying Prevention



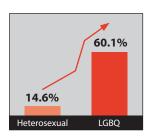
**57%** 

**HAVE SEX BY THE TIME THEY GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL** and 33.7% of current students have ever had sex (national average = 40%)



# 1 in 3

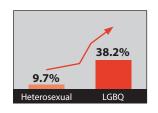
Nationally, one in three high school students **EXPERIENCE DATING VIOLENCE** by the time they are 18.<sup>5</sup>



17.7%

of high school students seriously **CONSIDERED ATTEMPTING SUICIDE**.

- That includes 14.6% of students identifying as heterosexual;
- growing to 60.1% for lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning (LGBQ) students.



11.6%

of students in Nebraska **EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE** with a stark difference for LGBQ students

- 9.7% heterosexual students
- 38.2% for LGBO students

Effective health education promotes <u>social and emotional learning (SEL)</u> that contributes to academic achievement, fewer truancies<sup>6</sup>, reduced risk-taking and healthy relationships.<sup>7</sup> A 2020 analysis of three decades of research<sup>8</sup> demonstrated increased student efficacy in:

- Empathy
- → Respect for others and increased bystander interventions
- Communication

- → Positive self-image (including body image)
- → Increased recognition of gender equity
- → Increased sense of self-control and safety



Inclusive, equitable health education, in alignment with the Nebraska State Board of Education's Non-Discrimination and Equitable Educational Opportunities in School Position Statement, allows for trained teachers that create a network of caring adults and a protective school environment for all students.

- LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt.9
- → Having six LGBTQ supportive teachers or staff in a school can turn the environment from toxic to protective.<sup>10</sup>
- Social determinants of health must be addressed in the curriculum with a focus on how race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression are related to inequitable health outcomes because of systemic injustices.<sup>11</sup>

# **PARENTS/CAREGIVERS MATTER**

### Effective school-based health education provides resources and support to enhance parent-child communication.

- In a representative sample of 1,500 parents from the Omaha Public School district, 93.1% supported the teaching of abstinence and prevention along with over 70% of parents supporting instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>12</sup>
- Parents and likely voters, regardless of political affiliation, religion and/or regional demographic, overwhelmingly support instruction on abstinence, birth control, STIs, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and puberty.<sup>13</sup>

#### Highlights from 2018-2019 Nebraska School Health Profiles:

- The good news: 65.6% encourage staff to attend professional development on safe and supportive school environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Only 14.5% of Nebraska schools implement HIV, STD and pregnancy prevention strategies that meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and guestioning youth.
- Young people are disproportionately impacted by STDs and information about condoms is a key protective factor.<sup>14</sup> Only 8% of high school students have been tested for STDs and only 23% of Nebraska schools instruct on how to consistently and correctly use a condom.

"If people do not have the information needed to make choices, they will fill in the gaps. **Providing** fact-based, youth-oriented content prepares young people to be safe and responsible sexually healthy individuals."

- Cleo Zagurski (she/her), 18 years old Senior at Burke High School

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