

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Instructional Materials Review 2023

Comprehensive Health Skills

Year Published/Revised: 2023

Publisher: The Goodheart-Willcox Company Inc.

Website: <https://www.g-w.com/comprehensive-health-skills-ms-2023#li>

Full or Supplemental: Full

Grade Level: Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Student Population: General

Duration/Number of Lessons: 8 units, 20 lessons (CSHE content in units 6-8)

Format and Features: Teacher resources, companion website, student workbook, handouts

Available in Multiple Languages: English, Spanish

Evidence-based/informed: No

National Standards Alignment: National Health Education Standards, National Sexuality Education Standards

Consistent with WA Health Education Standards? Yes, alignment provided

Consistent with Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Law? Yes

Consistent with AIDS Omnibus Act? Yes

Inclusive Materials/Strategies: Yes

Bias-Free Materials: Yes



Primary Subject Areas and Topics Required by Law:

- Anatomy and Physiology, Reproduction, and Pregnancy (Pregnancy for Grade 6+)
- Growth and Development/Puberty
- Self-Identity (gender stereotypes, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.)
- Prevention (general)
 - HIV/AIDS Prevention
 - Pregnancy Prevention
 - STD Prevention
 - Health Care and Prevention Resources
- Healthy Relationships (general)
 - Affirmative Consent
 - Bystander Training
 - Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication Skills for Healthy Relationships
 - The development of meaningful relationships and avoidance of exploitative relationships
- Understanding the influences of family, peers, community, and the media throughout life on healthy sexual relationships

Reviewer Comments:

Reviewer 306

This curriculum is very thorough and covers all the needed and required topics. The workbook, handouts, and companion website provide lots of different resources and options for students and opportunities for teachers to pick and choose what might work best for their classes. While this curriculum does use some gender-neutral language, there are some areas where it could be more inclusive in the language used. The section on sexuality and gender covers important topics, but the ideas about there being a range and spectrum of gender and sexual orientation and identity could be worked better in throughout the curriculum. Some of the case studies do include non-binary and transgender people in them, which is good, but it could be better in this aspect.

It does include some information about birth control and pregnancy prevention other than abstinence, but really focuses on abstinence and encourages young people to wait to engage in sexual activity, which may not be realistic. All scenarios and case studies regarding young people engaging in sexual activity include things like getting STIs, or other negative consequences and seem to be coming from a fear-based approach to young people and sex.

Overall, this is a comprehensive curriculum that is age appropriate, with lots of detailed information and activities to give students the opportunity to engage in critical thinking, and practice decision making and communication skills as well.



Reviewer 307

The curriculum is comprehensive, has up to date information, and is easy for an instructor to use. There is a companion website with videos, flash cards, vocabulary games, and online quizzes available. Some of the online materials are available in Spanish, but that is the only alternate language. The curriculum includes a variety of family types in its' examples and tries to be inclusive. There is a wealth of good information; however, it would be difficult to cover it all in a typical semester health class. Unit 6 covers Healthy Relationships. A variety of relationship types are covered and ways to determine the quality of those relationships are addressed. Bullying, cyberbullying, abuse, neglect, and other types of violence are addressed with information given as to how to prevent and respond to these situations. How to respond as a victim and bystander is addressed. Unit 7 covers child development, puberty, and other stages of life. It does a good job covering STI's and HIV in a comprehensive, inclusive manner. Unit 8 does a good job covering sexuality including lessons on biological sex, gender, gender roles, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Material is presented in a non-judgmental, informative way. Sexting is covered. The physical, emotional, and social consequences of being sexually active are covered. Refusal skills and affirmative consent have quality lessons. All in all, this is a comprehensive, updated middle school curriculum.

Reviewer 308

This is a well laid-out curriculum. The companion website, student workbook, and handouts give options for different learners or the ability to switch up styles for different units. Overall, it is a good, comprehensive resource.

Reviewer 309

It appears that some new sections have been added to address support for LGBTQ+ students and to combat homophobia and transphobia. However, other sections continue to use outdated language and assumptions.

Students questioning or exploring their gender identity or sexual orientation are described as "confused." Gender diverse identities are not mentioned in main section on gender identity.

Use of "opposite" to describe sex and gender assume only two exist. "Different" is more appropriate given the diversity of gender and biological sex.

Intersex bodies are presented as disordered rather than as natural human variation. Only male and female offered as biological sexes. In chromosome discussion, XXY is referred to as male, not as intersex.

Case study, "Aidan's 'Perfect' Relationship" reads as shaming and reinforces stigma associated with STIs.

A heavy emphasis on abstinence with no discussion of planning or safeguards, such as condoms, to prepare when intentions to remain abstinent change in the moment.

Reviewer 311

This is a very promising curriculum to use. It provides quality content that is inclusive of many contemporary and relevant topics. The teacher resources included are easy to navigate. The textbook



for students itself is what was so impressive to me. The inclusion of sexuality and identity formation, sexual violence awareness and prevention, and healthy relationships is huge, especially in this age group. I do wish the text had discussed the existence of puberty suppressors or “puberty blockers” or discussed the transition from old terms to new terms and the nuances therein more, using intersex has changed to using disorders of sex development (some folks in this community prefer differences of sex development for instance.) The text is well-written and more comprehensive than many other curricula on the same topic that this reviewer has reviewed over the years. I would recommend this curriculum for teachers to use. I would also still encourage them to discuss things within and outside of the text with their classes. This curriculum still has some room to improve (e.g., paying attention to trans-inclusive language, particularly non-binary language) however, over all the curriculum is very high quality.

Reviewer 322

Units 6, 7, and 8 contain age-appropriate, science-based, and well-written information on an impressive breadth of topics related to healthy relationships, prevention, and sexual and social wellness. The curriculum center offers a very large selection of teacher resources and supplemental materials, offering print and online learning and assessment tools. Spanish versions of the text, audio transcripts, and closed captioning make the curriculum more accessible. I am not sure if the materials are fully compatible for text-to-speech. They offer pedagogical tips, including skills-based, critical thinking, differentiation, health literacy, and cultural responsiveness. There is a clear bias towards abstinence and avoidance as you progress through the reading and accompanying activities. I wish for more discussion opportunity on how youth can healthily explore their growing curiosity around sex and acknowledge more of the potentially positive outcomes from sexual exploration. Overall, the curriculum presents moderately inclusive and bias-free information. I hope authors continue to strive toward better visual and descriptive representation of diverse bodies and wider variety of experiences and mental/emotional relationships to one’s changing body and sexuality.

Other notable strengths: - Question & answer/Interview style videos with young actors. - The content feels modern and incorporates online communication/use of smart devices practically and non-judgmentally; covers online relationships, cyberbullying, and the legal/emotional consequences of sexting. - “Develop Your Skills” sections, I found those to offer some of the most critically engaging activities. - Gender-neutral terms are used consistently throughout. - Descriptions of emotional challenges common at different stages of life including grief. - Appreciate the normalization around masturbation. - Included the medical use of hormonal birth control to treat menstrual pain. - There are solid sections on consent (particularly figure 19.25) and preventing sexual harassment. - Inclusion of community-based strategies for prevention, safety, and promoting culture of respect.

Other improvements needed: Graphics and illustrative scenarios depict mostly heterosexual couples and completely omit people with disabilities. - de-stigmatize some language around intersex youth/diversity of sexual development: e.g., replace “unclear biological sex/sexual traits” with “distinctive” or “unique” sex organs or sexual traits - Boundaries and refusal skills are valuable subjects included and I wish they were also applied to non-dating relationships and not only to promote



abstinence. Include skills-building around learning and respecting another person's boundaries. - Expand coverage of power differentials in relationships and how to mitigate - Missing dental dams as a form of STI prevention. - Ch 19 overemphasis on the negative consequences of sexual activity and how to resist sexual risk and pressure. I support the goal to delay sexual activity. What troubles me is that these sections make sex sound terribly stressful, which I would not necessarily want to promote. - "Avoiding risky situations" and "responding to sexual assault" sections of 19.3; there are more suggestions to keep oneself from "being" sexually assaulted as opposed to strategies to reduce perpetration; also, the authors do not acknowledge that freezing and passive resistance are common survival responses during sexual assault and rape.

Reviewer 324 (Med/Sci)

Overall, I found the information accurate and well presented; there were some updates needed in data. it was, however, written at a very advanced level and the formatting made it challenging to read - if I found it be so, this will likely be even more challenging for middle school students.

