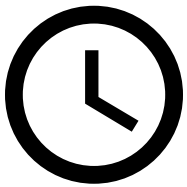


**Comprehensive Sexual Health Education** is “a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and, understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.”<sup>5</sup>

## Research shows that **Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE)** results in:



### Delayed onset of sexual activity

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can reduce the number of young people having sex.<sup>2</sup> Young people who receive high quality Comprehensive Sexual Health Education are shown to delay the onset of sexual activity until later in life.<sup>2</sup> Talking about sexual health does not encourage students to have sex earlier.<sup>6</sup>



### Increased use of birth control and decreased unintended pregnancies

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can lead to a decrease in unintended teen pregnancies and abortions. Students who receive Comprehensive Sexual Health Education use birth control (including condoms) more frequently and effectively, know where to access them, and are empowered to do so in their sexual relationships.<sup>2,3,5,6</sup>



### Decreased gender-based violence

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can improve critical gender-based violence prevention knowledge and skills, including increasing bystander intervention skills, improve knowledge of sexual abuse, and increase help-seeking behaviours.<sup>1,7</sup> As a result, gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, dating violence, and bullying based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation can be reduced.<sup>1,5,7</sup>

## Reduced STI transmission



Improved self-efficacy and communication skills learned in Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can reduce STI transmission.<sup>3,6</sup> School-based Comprehensive Sexual Health Education also leads to less frequently reported sex without a condom.<sup>6</sup> When young people learn how to effectively prevent STIs through condom use and other safer sex strategies, this leads to a reduction in their risk of STIs and HIV.<sup>1</sup>

## Enhanced sexual and reproductive health



Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can build life skills that benefit both sexual health and overall wellbeing. Comprehensive Sexual Health Education can result in higher self-efficacy, self-esteem, confidence, decision-making, and negotiation skills in students.<sup>6,7</sup> These important life skills help students make sexually healthy choices (including consent) and have lifelong impacts.<sup>4</sup> Students demonstrate improved media literacy related to sexuality,<sup>3</sup> and improved ability to access sexual and reproductive health services.<sup>4,5</sup>

## Reduced homophobic and sexist attitudes that contribute to violence



Comprehensive Sexual Health Education programs that address and challenge gender norms can reduce risk factors for relationship violence, encourage conversations (disclosures) about sexual violence and abuse, and can reduce partner and gender-based violence.<sup>1,3,4,5,6,7</sup>

### What about **abstinence-based** sexual health education?

Abstinence-based sexual health education commonly involves teaching students to refrain from engaging in sexual activities and/or intercourse, usually until marriage. Abstinence-only sexual health education **may not** delay the onset of sexual activity or result in students reducing their number of sexual partners.<sup>2,6</sup>

Abstinence-only sexual health education may:

- Further marginalize 2SLGBTQI+\* students.<sup>2</sup>
- Stigmatize young people who are sexually active or pregnant.<sup>2</sup>
- Withhold vital, medically accurate information about sexual health, pregnancy, abortions and STIs.<sup>2</sup>
- Lead to higher rates of sexual activity, unplanned pregnancies and STIs in young people.<sup>2,6</sup>

\* Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and other identities

### References:

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