

Minnesota Sexuality Education Resource Review Panel

Summary of Panel Review
Review Date: January 2007

Abstinence Works – A Program for Middle School (2007)

Curriculum

Target Audience: **Stated Audience:** Grades 6-9

Panel Recommended Audience: Grades 4-6 along with other non “abstinence only,” curriculum

Cost: \$54.95

Distributor: ETR Associates

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**The Minnesota Sexuality Education Resource Review Panel

Does Not Recommend

 use of this curriculum for the following reasons:**

Review Summary:

Abstinence Works is an intensive abstinence-only program designed for adolescents in grades 6-9. The 18 sessions are designed to build and reinforce values about abstinence and teach skills to help teens maintain a commitment to abstinence. The curriculum was designed to meet performance indicators for the National Health Education Standards and the Federal A-to-H Abstinence Education Guidelines. Cost includes Teacher Guide and CD with all teacher and student master materials.

The panel does not recommend the *Abstinence Works* curriculum for the following reasons:

- Curriculum follows the A-H Federal Guidelines for Abstinence Education. These guidelines are not factual or evidence-based and therefore the curriculum provides inaccurate and unscientific information.
- Contains incomplete information, focusing only on abstinence with an emphasis on abstinence-until-marriage (i.e. no mention of contraception or STD testing and treatment).
- Although activities address social and peer pressures for engaging in sexual activity and provides tools to avoid sexual activity, there is no support for youth who have experienced sexual violence.
- Curriculum does not provide explicit information, resources, or support for young people who identify as GLBT, people who have experienced sexual violence, or teens that are sexually active.
- Role-play activities were unrealistic, uncommon, and too repetitive.

Overall, the panel **does not recommend** the *Abstinence Works* curriculum. Panel members conclude that the *Abstinence Works* curriculum should not be used as a sexual health education curriculum and does not meet the standards for recommendation. Of the few panel members who recommended the curriculum with reservations, they agreed that group leaders would need to be prepared for questions about choices other than abstinence, the targeted audience should be younger, and an additional curriculum with information on contraception and STDs would need to be supplemented.

Abstinence Works (2007)

Assessment Criteria	Mean Score	Comments
Accuracy of Information - Provides basic, accurate information about teen sexual health, e.g., risks of teen sexual activity, ways to avoid intercourse or use methods of protection against pregnancy and STDs, human growth and development, relationships, etc.	1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum follows the 8-point Federal guidelines. These guidelines are not science or evidence-based therefore curriculum does not include accurate information. (10 similar comments from committee members). Includes very basic sexual health information, lacks more clear, concise and relevant information on STD's. Implies causation inappropriately (abstinence <u>causes</u> teens not to drink, use drugs, <u>causes</u> teens to do better in school) uses federal guidelines – “likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects” that is <u>not</u> a fact.
Focus - Focuses on ways to promote sexual health e.g., reducing one or more sexual behaviors that lead to unintended pregnancy or HIV/STD infection; understanding healthy physical/emotional development; developing healthy relationships, etc.	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good relationship section. Good look at long-term risk of sexual activity vs. goals. Includes a little about puberty. Strong focus on abstinence and negative consequences of young people having sex. Does not mention other ways to promote sexual health besides abstinence.
Messages - Delivers and consistently reinforces a clear message, e.g., states message multiple times in multiple ways.	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very clear and consistent message of abstaining from sex until marriage. Does not address sexual violence. Clearly states a <u>negative</u> message about sexuality.
Addresses Social Pressures - Includes activities that address social pressures that influence sexual behavior.	2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses some social pressures including peers (positive and negative) and media. Strong emphasis on planning. Implies that all participants <u>are</u> committed to abstinence. Does not address social pressures in realistic situations.
Communication Skills - Provides examples of and practice with being assertive, using negotiation and refusal skills, making decisions, etc.	3.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides examples of communication skills. However, many are unrealistic and don't take into account majority of circumstances for teens. Very focused on the communication skill of refusing to have sex.
Teaching Methods - Employs a variety of teaching methods designed to involve participants and have them personalize the information.	3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some variety of activities but too many overheads. Too much direction, <u>challenging to personalize information and actively engage</u>.
Appropriateness for Audience - Incorporates behavioral goals, teaching methods, and materials that are appropriate to the age, sexual experience, and culture of the students (as stated by publisher.)	2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Excludes</u> young people that don't fit these “standards.” Not appropriate for sexually active students, GLBT youth, students from single parent homes, or anyone who has experienced sexual abuse. Grades 6th-9th okay. Would go down to 4th.
Multicultural Perspective - This resource is most appropriate for the following audiences.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a multicultural perspective.
Teacher-Friendly - Is well organized with clear, thorough instructions or discussion guide. Minimal assembly or preparation time required.	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized. Lays out preparation required and time frame for activities, which is helpful. A lot of repetition that requires flipping back and forth. Too content heavy with too many transparencies.
Facilitation Skills Required - How knowledgeable and skilled must the facilitator be to use this resource effectively?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires leader with strong to moderate content knowledge and group skills. Needs person and institution who agrees with federal guidelines. Group leader would need to be prepared for questions about choices other than abstinence.
Presentation Quality - How appealing is the product (e.g. visual quality, sound quality, graphics, etc.)?	1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive and boring. No Pictures, no graphics. Transparencies are not interesting.
Overall Recommendation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend Highly - 0 Recommend – 4 Reject -16