

SC SEX ED

It's Not Working

Staff Editorial

The 1988 law setting Comprehensive Health as the definitive sexual education program in the state began with good intentions: to standardize a medically accurate course to properly teach young adults about their bodies and the danger of sexually transmitted diseases. This law was passed during the 'AIDS Epidemic' when it was paramount to most law makers to do something to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

South Carolina's Comprehensive Health Education course about sexual relationships teaches strictly abstinence, and if we want to help students, then the curricula must change.

"We follow the law," said Mrs. Cherri Young, Director of Fort Mill Middle and High School Education. The course meets a state standard that is set in Columbia, but the objective is outdated and ineffective because it does not teach students what they need to know.

While in theory an abstinence-only education should reduce the teen pregnancy rate, statistics show it does the opposite. South Carolina has the ninth highest teen pregnancy rate in the nation with 65 per 1000 teen girls getting pregnant, according to the Center for Disease Control. Of the other states with the highest pregnancy rates, all but

Hawaii teaches abstinence only. Teens in these regions also have a higher STD rate due to lack of education about contraceptives.

By nature teens are rebellious and are pressured from many outside influences, perhaps the least of which is school - for example, popular musicians like Drake & Jay Z produce countless songs including sexual double entendres.

The current sex ed policy is obviously flawed, but what can South Carolina do to teach students about sex while keeping them from getting unwanted pregnancies or STDs? Nations around the world including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, and Japan, are adopting a 'sex positive' program. Rather than teaching teens only how to avoid sex, this type of course also teaches how to have safer sex - handing out condoms and giving in-depth instruction on how to avoid STDs and unwanted pregnancies.

This type of education has lowered the teen pregnancy and STD rates in most countries adopting it.

The answer to South Carolina's STD and teen pregnancy epidemics is to implement a similar course. As more countries switch to this type of program, it certainly appears that a more informative course is the future of sexual education, and South Carolina needs to catch up.