

Key Concepts Guide for FLASH

Key concepts are main ideas. They convey big-picture ideas. “Birth control is good at preventing pregnancy” and “Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how” are both key concepts, to name just a few.

Focusing on key concepts is a strategy for achieving deeper learning, utilized throughout the field of education. It grows out of efforts to cultivate lasting understanding. For educators teaching sexual health education, employing this approach often involves a shift in practice towards sharing a significantly smaller number of sexual health facts, and putting a new and greater emphasis on conceptual frameworks.

This guide provides key concepts for several sexual health education topics. The key concepts are aligned with the behavioral goals of FLASH, and likewise, are based on the most current research on the prevention of teen pregnancy, STDs, HIV and sexual violence. For pregnancy, STD and HIV prevention, in particular, they align with well-established risk and protective factors, identified by researcher Doug Kirby.

We hope that educators will find this guide helpful in providing meaningful and effective sexual health education to their students.

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Puberty Key Concepts

Elementary and Middle School

Puberty is a good thing – whenever it happens – it means a person’s growing up.

- Puberty is when a person’s body, feelings, and relationships start changing from a child’s into an adult’s.
- Everyone goes through puberty at their own speed and when the time is right for their body.
- During puberty, a person becomes physically able to start a pregnancy. This doesn’t mean that they are ready to be a parent.
- Some people start having more intense crushes and/or sexual feelings during puberty.

Puberty is very similar for boys and girls.

- Most of the changes of puberty happen to everyone, no matter what sex they are.
- A few changes happen only to boys or only to girls, such as periods for girls and sperm production for boys.
- Male and female bodies are more alike than different. For example, everyone has both male and female sex hormones and everyone gets more body hair at puberty. Besides, we all have hearts, lungs, brains, etc.

People’s bodies can look very different from each other, but still be normal and healthy.

- Two people could have different heights, weights, breast or penis sizes -- all kinds of differences -- and both be just fine.

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

- During puberty and, especially, adolescence people often get better at understanding other people’s feelings and points of view.
- Different cultures, religions, and families have different opinions about things like deodorant, shaving, dating, curfews, and clothing.
- It is not okay to make fun of people’s bodies or tease them because of when they go through puberty or because they seem different than you.

You can handle this.

- It can be an exciting time when people may get new privileges and responsibilities.
- Many people are curious about how their bodies will look after they go through puberty; some are worried and that’s normal, too.
- People may want more time alone during this time or more time with friends than when they were younger. Sometimes those changes are challenging for the whole family.
- Most people feel self-conscious at least some of the time during puberty. Almost everyone gets more self-confident by the end of their teens, if not sooner.

Birth Control Key Concepts

Elementary School

Birth control is a way to prevent pregnancy.

Most adults use birth control at some point in their life.

There are lots of different kinds of birth control.

Birth control is very safe.

Birth Control Key Concepts

Middle and High School

Birth Control is good at preventing pregnancy.

- Using ANY method of birth control is much more effective at preventing pregnancy than using none.
- Emergency contraception is the only birth control method that prevents pregnancy after sex.

Condoms are good at preventing pregnancy, STDs and HIV.

- Condoms are the only birth control method that also protects against STDs and HIV.
- Using a condom plus another effective birth control method provides even better protection against pregnancy.

Birth control is very safe.

- All methods of birth control have less health risks than pregnancy and childbirth.

Many teens successfully use birth control.

- In Washington State, teens can get birth control without their parent/guardian's consent.
- In this community, teens can get birth control at XXX clinic.

STD and HIV Key Concepts

Elementary School

People can prevent getting HIV and giving HIV to other people.

Kids your age don't usually catch HIV.

- People who catch HIV usually get it from having sex and sharing needles with somebody who already has HIV.
- It's hard to get HIV.

HIV is a virus that kills people.

- People who have HIV can live for a long time, with the help of a doctor.

STDs are certain kinds of illnesses. They are caused by germs that can spread from one person's body to another during sex.

- Doctors can help people get better from most STDs.
- STDs are bad for your body, but they don't usually kill people.

It's important to treat everyone with respect, including people who have HIV and other STDs.

- You don't have to feel nervous about being around someone who has HIV.
- You can't tell someone has HIV from looking at them.

STD and HIV Key Concepts

Middle and High School

HIV is a virus that kills people.

- HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.
- Some people who have HIV can live for a long time, with the help of a doctor.

People catch HIV and other STDs from someone else who has it, usually by having sex with them. HIV is also spread by sharing needles with someone who has HIV.

- Lots of teens have STDs. It is very important for teens to protect themselves.
- Some groups of teens are at higher risk for acquiring an STD. For instance gay and bi guys may be more likely to have a partner with HIV, straight girls are more likely to get chlamydia. Everyone can protect themselves and the people they have sex with.

You can prevent getting HIV and other STDs.

- You cannot catch HIV or other STDs from casual contact, like holding hands, sharing drinks, or kissing.
- The best thing a person can do to prevent catching HIV and other STDs is not to share needles and not to have sex.
- The best thing a person can do to prevent catching HIV and other STDs, if they are having sex, is to use a condom.

Many teens successfully use condoms.

- Almost all sexually active teens have used condoms at some point.
- Condoms are easy to get and easy to use.
- Condoms give men an opportunity to take an important role in preventing pregnancy, HIV and STDs.

The only way to know if you have HIV or other STDs is to get tested for them.

- In Washington, teens don't need anyone's permission to get a HIV test.
- There are many people who have HIV or other STDs but don't know they have them.
- In this community, teens can get an STD or HIV test at XXX clinic.
- Most STDs, including HIV, don't have any symptoms.
- You can't tell someone has HIV or other STDs from looking at them.

It's important to treat everyone with respect, including people who have HIV and other STDs.

- It is not okay to bully or hurt someone because they have HIV or another STD.

Abstinence Key Concepts

Elementary School

Abstinence is just a word that means not having sex.

- There are 3 main kinds of sex: oral, anal and vaginal. Oral sex is when one person's mouth goes on another person's genitals, anal sex is when a penis goes in someone's anus (butt), and vaginal sex is when a penis goes in someone's vagina.
- Women get pregnant from having vaginal sex with a man.

People choose to abstain from sex at different times in their lives.

- It is safest for kids to wait until they are older to have sex.
- Abstinence is not just for kids – many adults are abstinent.
- People can choose to be abstinent any time they want.
- People can be abstinent no matter what their sexual orientation. Gay and lesbian people choose abstinence; so do straight people.
- A person who has had sex before can still choose to be abstinent.

Abstinence is a 100% effective way to not get pregnant or catch an STD.

- People can catch HIV or other STDs from having oral, anal or vaginal sex with someone who has HIV or an STD.

Abstinence Key Concepts

Middle and High School

Abstinence is just a word that means not having sex.

- There are 3 main kinds of sex: oral, anal and vaginal. Oral sex is when one person's mouth goes on another person's genitals, anal sex is when a penis goes in someone's anus (butt), and vaginal sex is when a penis goes in someone's vagina.

People choose to abstain from sex at different times in their life.

- Most adults choose abstinence during certain times in their life.
- People of every sexual orientation choose abstinence – gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight.
- A person who has had sex before can still choose to be abstinent.
- Most teenagers are abstinent. Only about half of all teenagers have had sex by the time they graduate high school.
- People choose not to have sex for lots of reasons. They may be thinking of their future plans, their religion, protecting their health, waiting for the right person or other reasons.

Abstinence is a 100% effective way to not get pregnant or catch an STD.

- People who are not having sex still need to learn about birth control and STDs, so they can be healthy in the future and so they can help their friends.

There are some important things people do to make abstinence work for them.

- It is important for people to talk about whether or not they want to have sex before they are in a sexual situation.
- It is helpful for people to know for themselves why they are choosing abstinence.
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol can make it easier to be abstinent.
- It is helpful to have friends who support the decision to abstain from sex.
- It is helpful to avoid situations where sexual activity is more likely, such as being home alone with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Sexual Violence Key Concepts

Elementary Concepts

Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.

- Adults should never touch kids on their genitals, bottoms or breasts unless that adult is a doctor or that adult is helping you bathe or dress.
- You shouldn't have to let someone hug or kiss you if you don't want to.

It is never okay to make someone else touch you if they don't want to.

- It is not okay to trick someone or talk them into touching you.
- You shouldn't have to hug or kiss someone if you don't want to.

There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl. There are no "girl things" or "boy things."

- It is not okay to make fun of boys for doing things that are thought of as "girl things," or to make fun of girls for doing things that are thought of as "boy things."
- People have a lot of ideas about what boys and girls should be interested in that just aren't true. Of course, people are interested in all different kinds of things.

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

- It is not okay to hurt other people or be mean to them.
- It is not okay to bully or tease someone because they are different than you.
- It is not okay to make fun of other people's bodies.

If a kid has been touched in a way that made them uncomfortable, it is important to tell a grown-up who can help.

- If you find out that a friend has been touched in a way that makes them uncomfortable, it is important to help your friend find a grown-up to tell who will help.
- If you tell a grown-up that you need help and they don't help you, find another grown-up and tell them too.

Sexual Violence Key Concepts

Middle and High School

Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.

- You don't have to let anyone touch you, no matter who that person is.

It is never okay to touch someone else if they don't want you to, or to make them touch you.

- It is never okay to trick or pressure someone into sexual activity.
- It is not okay to touch someone else in a way that makes them uncomfortable.
- Consent means that you know FOR SURE that the other person is saying okay.
- Having sex with someone without getting consent is against the law.

If person has been sexually abused or raped, it is important to tell an adult who can help.

- If you find out that a friend has been sexually abused or raped, it is important to help your friend find an adult to tell who will help.
- There are professionals who can help someone who has been raped or molested to stay safe and to feel better.
- If a person is raped or molested, it is not their fault.
- Lots of guys and girls have been molested or raped when they were kids or teenagers. It happens more often than people think.
- Being raped or molested does not change someone's sexual orientation – it cannot "make them gay" or "make them straight."

There are laws about sex that everyone must follow.

- Having sex with someone who is much younger than you is against the law.
- Having sex with someone without getting consent is against the law.
- Adults are not allowed to have sex with kids or touch them in sexual ways.

There are lots of ways to be a guy or a girl.

- U.S. society teaches us things about how men and women should act that are not true and that can actually harm people.
- It is not okay to make fun of guys for doing things that are thought of as "girl things," or to make fun of girls for doing things that are thought of as "guy things."

It is not okay to tease or hurt someone for being gay.

- Being gay doesn't make someone less of a man or less of a woman.
- Most guys who do things that are thought of as "girl things," and girls who do things that are thought of as "guy things" are not gay.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Key Concepts

Elementary School

It is important to treat everyone with caring and respect, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their family members.

- If you hear somebody put down gay people – or *any* people – you can tell them you think it's mean (unfair, unkind).
- If you see somebody getting picked on, you can let them know that you think they deserve to be treated better.
- You can ask an adult for help.

Kids' families are made up of all kinds of people.

- Most people have gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people in their family.
- Some people have parents who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl. There are no "girl things" or "boy things."

- It is not okay to make fun of boys for doing things or wearing colors that you may think are just for girls or to make fun of girls for doing things you may think are for boys.
- People have a lot of ideas about what boys and girls should be interested in that just aren't true. People are interested in all different kinds of things.

You can't make someone gay or make them straight.

- Nothing happens to a person that makes them gay.
- If a person is gay, no one can change that about them.

You can't tell if a person is gay, lesbian or bisexual by looking at them.

- Gay, lesbian and bisexual people look just like everyone else.
- Most guys who do things that are thought of as "girl things," and girls who do things that are thought of as "guy things" are not gay.

There is lots of diversity in people's bodies.

- Most people have 2 sex chromosomes (XX if they're a girl and XY if they're a boy); some don't.
- Most girls have two ovaries and most boys have two testes; some don't.
- Most girls have certain hormones that come from their ovaries and most boys have other hormones that come from their testicles. Girls also have some male hormones and boys also have some female hormones.
- People's bodies aren't all exactly the way you see in puberty videos and very few people look like the ones in ads and movies and music videos.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Key Concepts

Middle and High School

A person figures out if they are gay, lesbian or bisexual because of how they feel, not what they do.

- A person does not have to have sex with someone to know what their sexual orientation is.
- Having sex with someone of another gender does not mean someone is straight, nor does having sex with someone of the same gender necessarily mean that someone is gay.

There are lots of ways to be a guy or a girl.

- U.S. society teaches us things about how men and women should act that are not true and that can actually harm people.

There are important ways to show respect to people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender.

- It is respectful to use the name and pronoun that people request.
- Terms like “gay,” “lesbian,” and “queer” can be used respectfully and they can also be used as weapons, just like terms such as “girl.” It is never right to use someone’s identity as a slur.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teens, like other young people, need to learn about birth control and STD prevention.

- Everyone needs to learn about birth control and condoms, in case they ever have sexual encounters where they need the protection.
- Everyone needs to learn about pregnancy and STD prevention so that they can support their friends in making healthy choices.

We don’t know why some people are gay, lesbian or bisexual and others are heterosexual. Or why some people are trans and some aren’t.

- It may have something to do with a person’s genes or the hormones they were exposed to before they were born, and it might be partly developed after birth.
- We know it’s *not* whether a person was abused or how they feel about their parents that causes them to be gay or straight.
- The sexual orientations and gender identities of a person’s parents have nothing to do with their kids’ sexual orientation or gender identity. Most gay, lesbian and bisexual people have straight parents; most transgender people’s parents aren’t trans.