

A U. S. GOVERNMENT REPORT SHOWS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS,
REGARDLESS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION, ARE BETTER OFF NOT HAVING SEX:
Sex Education Should Not Sexualize Students

Laura Haynes, Ph.D.¹

A comprehensive study by the United States government Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that, nationwide, high school students who were never sexually active, regardless of sexual orientation, were far better off in many respects. The “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017” survey looked at students in public, charter, and non-public high schools.

Researchers discovered that many students, regardless of sexual orientation, were not sexually active. They reported:

“Nationwide, 45.3% of students had had sexual contact with only the opposite sex, 1.6% had had sexual contact with only the same sex, 5.3% had had sexual contact with both sexes, and 47.8% had had no sexual contact” (p. 20).

“Nationwide, among students who had no sexual contact, 87.6% identified as heterosexual; 7.7% identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; and 4.7% were not sure of their sexual identity” (p. 20).

High school students who had NO sexual contact were far less likely to:

- Feel sad or hopeless for 2 weeks in a row or seriously consider, plan, or attempt suicide.
- Use alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, inhalants, heroin, methamphetamine, ecstasy, hallucinogenic drugs, steroids without a doctor’s prescription, prescription pain medicine without or not following a doctor’s prescription, or any injected illegal drug.
- Be a victim of bullying, forced sexual intercourse, or sexual or physical violence by anyone or by a date.
- Engage in risky behavior (ride with a driver who had been drinking alcohol or using marijuana, drive when they had been drinking alcohol, text while driving).
- Engage in behaviors that contribute to violence (carry a weapon or gun or be in a physical fight).

While this study tells us these unhealthy experiences are significantly less likely to occur among high school students who have no sexual contact, it cannot tell us what factors

¹ Dr. Laura Haynes is a California psychologist, retired after 40 years of clinical experience, who reviews research, writes, and speaks internationally on sexual orientation and gender identity.

may have been causes, what factors may have been results, or what other factors not named in the study may have been causes both for students remaining sexually inactive and for these other health factors. But it does reveal that high school students, whatever their sexual orientation, are safer and better off by far if they sexually abstain. And this is true even before we mention the self-evident advantages of reproductive health and pregnancy prevention.

It should be obvious that sexual abstinence ought to be a primary goal directing sex education. Desensitizing second graders to images of boys' and girls' sex organs and teaching them that they are sensitive to touch is titillating toward sexual exploration and activity that is not in their interests. Further, any messaging that normalizes sexual activity for children or adolescents, or leads students to believe it is expected, is counter to the goal of healthy youth.

These comprehensive national health data support what most parents believe: no children or minor adolescents, regardless of sexual orientation, need to be having sex. Sex education should help them abstain.

Reference:

Redfield, R.R., Schuchat, A., Daphin, L., et al. (2018). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017. *MMWR Surveill Summ*, 67(8): 1-114. Pub: Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).