

GET|REAL

Comprehensive Sex Education That Works

Dear Parent or Other Caring Adult,

As you know, your child is attending a program called *Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works* in health class. The program gives young people the facts, in an age-appropriate way, on a range of sexual health and relationship topics. *Get Real* is based on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). It teaches students five skills that lead to healthy behavior: self-awareness, self-management, awareness of others, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

Get Real recognizes and supports parents and other trusted caregivers as the primary sexuality educators of their children. The teen years and changes of puberty can bring lots of questions and concerns for both parents and their kids. For many reasons, it can be hard to talk with children about sex. But results of a national survey show that parents have the most influence on their children's decision about sex. A recent study from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy found that 87% of U.S. teens said it would be easier to put off having sex if they were able to talk more openly about sex with their parents. But 37% said they had never had a talk with their parents on this topic.

Like last year, students in the *Get Real* program will bring home Family Activities for each class. These are designed to help families start conversations and share information. Please complete the homework with your student, sign, and return the sheet to class. Students who can't do the homework with a parent can work with a guardian or other trusted adult.

These Family Activities give parents a way to explore their own values about sex and sexuality. They'll help you provide facts and information your child can understand, and build skills for having ongoing talks about this important topic. Good information and other resources can also be found on the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts parent education website. Just visit www.pplm.org/education and click on "Parent Education."

Good communication between parents and children helps families share their values and enables young people to make healthier, safer and wiser decisions about sex. The themes below can help with your ongoing talks. Remember, it's your right and responsibility to share your values and the facts about sex with your child!

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Themes for Parents to Think About

Rights and Responsibilities

- As a parent, you have the right and responsibility to be your child's primary sexuality educator.
- Children *will* get information about sex from the culture around them.
- Taking action to teach your children about sexuality gives you the best chance of having a positive effect on their choices and experiences.
- Children have a right to get information from their parents. They also have a responsibility to understand that their choices about sexuality can have consequences.

Values

- Think about your own beliefs and values, so you can clearly share them with your child.
- Look at where your beliefs and values come from. Which are universal? (For example, all children have a right to be safe.) Which are more individual? (For example, people differ in their beliefs about when it's OK for young people to become sexually active.)
- Honest communication between parents and children is key.
- It's OK for parents and children to disagree about values. Examining values can be a powerful, positive influence on a child's developing sexuality.

Feelings and Self-Esteem

- Explore your own feelings around sexuality. Share some of these with your child. Encourage your child to share feelings too.
- Practice how to listen closely. Don't judge or criticize. This will build trust and help your child feel comfortable coming to you with questions or concerns.
- Help your children feel good about who they are. This will build healthy self-esteem and lead to good decisions.

Facts and Knowledge

- Find the resources you need to give your child clear and accurate information about sexuality.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Promise to get back to your child with the answer. Or look for it together.
- Connect. Keep talking in an ongoing, open way.