



COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION CASE STUDY: Selma Unified School District

Selma Unified School District is in a semi-rural area outside of Fresno, in a predominantly agricultural area of California's Central Valley. Selma has recently expanded its HIV/AIDS prevention education program at the high school to include components of a comprehensive sexual health education program. The district employs two school nurses that serve nine elementary schools and a licensed vocational nurse (LVN) who works full-time at Selma High School and has been a leader in developing this sexual health and peer health education class at the high school.

High school students are taught mandated HIV/AIDS prevention education by 9th grade science teachers using the *Positive Prevention - HIV/STD Prevention Education for California Youth*¹ curriculum published by the Red Cross. The district employs a common, state-approved *passive consent* process by which parents/guardians are informed of the HIV/AIDS education classes and passively give consent for their child to participate if they do NOT sign and return the notification form. Per state education code, the letter outlines times and procedures for interested parents/guardians to preview the curriculum and any associated educational materials.

During the 2009-10 school year, the LVN established an after school club that included 14 high school students. Club REAL (Responsible Educators About Life) participants received comprehensive sexual health education, which includes information and skill development on preventing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives, and healthy, respectful teen relationships. The students also learned how to develop and deliver health education lessons to their peers. They then delivered a session on a topic of their choice (the dangers of prescription drug abuse) to 45 high school students at a local health summit.

During the 2010-11 school year, the LVN was able to secure a grant from the Selma Healthcare District Foundation to expand this club into a 6th period elective peer health education class. She has 30 students enrolled and is co-teaching the class with the high school's at-risk counselor. A student enrolled in the peer health education class says she got involved because she wanted to "learn the truth and help other students out by helping them know fact from fiction." The same student shared that both the elective course and Club REAL "opened [her] eyes to a lot of teen health issues" and "because misinformation can lead to unexpected results, [the class and Club REAL] are important so that youth have information in mind instead of being unknown to what the world actually holds."

Christina Lallas (LVN) has noticed that since she began Club REAL, more students are coming to her for help with relationship and sexual health concerns. She participated in the annual Western Region Institute for Teachers and Community Health Educators (WRITCHE)² to learn more about how to help students make healthier decisions and handle related peer pressure. WRITCHE provides skill-building opportunities for teachers and health educators who teach about sexuality. The training is appropriate for both new and experienced educators.

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¹ <http://www.positiveprevention.com/index.html>

² <http://www.centerforhealthtraining.org/writche2010/index.html>