



Comprehensive Sexual Health Education

Case Study: Fremont Unified School District

Fremont Unified School District (FUSD), located in southern Alameda County, comprises 42 schools serving approximately 32,000 students in grades K-12. FUSD is starting to deliver components of a comprehensive sexual health education program. State law requires districts to offer parent passive consent for the mandated HIV/AIDS prevention education, although sexual health education may be opt-in (active consent), which FUSD requires before a student can participate in their comprehensive sexual health education program in middle and high school. FUSD offers some teacher training on their curriculum “FLASH,” using their school and library block grant funds which are allocated for secondary education. FUSD, like many other districts, is currently challenged with ensuring consistent implementation of the curriculum across grade levels and classrooms.

FUSD has grown and improved its sexual health education program in recent years. Until 2009, the district used an abstinence-only-until-marriage curriculum that was developed by a local agency. This middle school curriculum provided inaccuracies about condom effectiveness, criticized unmarried couples who “mate” and have children, and promoted an anti-abortion bias. The high school textbook also omitted required information about condoms and contraception and promoted abstinence until marriage in violation of California law. In 2008, parents and community members launched an effort to adopt an accurate, comprehensive curriculum that would meet state requirements. Supportive resources included CSBA’s model policy and a letter from the California Department of Education stating that abstinence-only instruction is not permitted in California schools. Students and teachers attended school board meetings to educate board members about the problems with the district’s sex education instruction and to propose solutions. The board subsequently acknowledged that the existing curriculum was out of compliance with the Education Code and asked the district administration to identify a compliant curriculum for adoption. Working with the district’s Health and Sex Education Advisory Committee, district administrators evaluated and selected the FLASH 7/8 curriculum, which the board then adopted for use in junior high. The district also adopted FLASH 9/10 for use in high school.

One of the strengths of Fremont USD’s strategy has been the development of the Advisory Committee, which has been in existence for twenty years. The role of the committee includes reviewing and discussing curricula and supplemental programs/materials, as well as bringing forth recommendations for the school board to vote on. The Committee Chair also provides a presentation to the school board once a year. This committee, however, has struggled with some members, particularly individuals who advocate for abstinence-only curricula that don’t comply with education code. The committee prides itself on having members who hold opposing viewpoints because doing so ensures that the community understands that different voices are being heard. The committee has worked to increase its diversity. Two seats are reserved for students (11th and 12th graders) to incorporate youth voice; allowing more than one youth seat creates a more comfortable environment for student participation. Committee seats are also reserved for parents, which provides them a safe space to voice their opinions and concerns. Community members who do not have children in the district also have a reserved spot. Currently, the committee is working on creating an ethnically diverse membership that is more reflective of the Fremont community.

Contact:

Kathy Ashford, Director, Secondary Education
Fremont Unified School District
P: 510.659.2513
E: kashford@fremont.k12.ca.us