

Sex Education: Understanding by Design Analysis

Enduring Understandings

Essential Questions

<p><i>Sex is normal.</i> The sex drive is a deep, powerful instinct that is at the core of our survival as a species. Sexual desire is normal and healthy, and having a satisfying sex life (quite apart from procreation) is an important part of adult happiness and self-esteem.</p>	<p>Why is sex on people's minds all the time?</p> <p>Is it normal for grown-ups to have sex even if they aren't planning on having a baby? Why?</p>
<p><i>Sex can be bad.</i> Despite its very positive side, sex can be one-sided, exploitative, hurtful, and even life-threatening. A surprising number of people have had bad experiences with sex: sexual abuse and rape can leave lifelong scars, countless people have sexually-transmitted diseases, and HIV / AIDS is a killer.</p>	<p>How can sex, which is meant to be so wonderful, hurt people?</p>
<p><i>Sex is difficult to talk about.</i> For most people, sex is intensely personal and private, and few are comfortable talking about it. Most parents do not communicate well with their children about sex, and many people grow up feeling awkward, even ashamed, about sex. Slang terms, euphemisms, misconceptions, myths, and attempts at sexual humor abound. Being able to talk comfortably and knowledgeably about sex is a key life skill.</p>	<p>Why are people always using bad words and making jokes and telling lies about sex?</p>
<p><i>The teen years are tricky.</i> Modern humans reach puberty eight to ten years before society considers it acceptable to have sexual intercourse. Teenagers have strong sexual urges and are bombarded with cultural messages about sex ("Just do it!"). Dealing with sexual desire is the central challenge of adolescence.</p>	<p>Why do kids reach puberty so many years before they are allowed to have sex? What are they supposed to do?</p>
<p><i>Teen sex is risky.</i> Many teenagers, feeling invulnerable, choose to become sexually active. But early sex can have lifelong consequences: sexually-transmitted diseases are rampant, including HIV / AIDS, and becoming pregnant as a teenager can severely limit a young woman's life options. Teen sex can also affect self-esteem.</p>	<p>Why shouldn't teenagers go ahead and have sex? It's a free country, isn't it?</p>
<p><i>Values are important.</i> Strong moral beliefs (and common sense) can help guide people through the sexual minefield. Some areas are controversial (e.g., premarital sex, masturbation, abortion, homosexuality), but it's possible to find universal values: sexual exploitation of children is wrong; sex between adults should always be consensual; sex is best in a loving relationship; marriage is a strong institution in which to raise children; open communication is good and sexual dishonesty is bad; knowledge is powerful, and ignorance is dangerous.</p>	<p>What's right and wrong when it comes to sex? Are there values that everyone can agree on?</p>
<p><i>Assertiveness is key.</i> Many people (especially teenagers) face situations in which they are tempted (or forced) to have sex that might be harmful or dangerous. Having the knowledge and assertiveness to avoid and/or deal with such situations is a critical life skill.</p>	<p>How can people avoid having the bad kind of sex?</p>

