



Collaborative for Comprehensive School-Age Health
A network of Northeast Ohio organizations promoting responsible sexual health
and comprehensive, age-appropriate abstinence-inclusive sexuality education

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Evaluation Demonstrates Success of Responsible Sexual Behavior Initiative in Schools: Age-appropriate, medically accurate sexuality education works!

Thanks to unprecedented cooperation and support among the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, their respective health departments, and many private youth-serving agencies, thousands of students are better equipped to make healthy choices about sexual behavior. So reports an evaluation of CMSD's K-12 Responsible Sexual Behavior Initiative, which recently completed its second year.

"Numerous studies have established that students who receive age-appropriate, medically accurate education about their bodies and how to protect themselves from disease and pregnancy are able to make healthy decisions," said Marcia Egbert, chair of the Collaborative for Comprehensive School-Age Health. "This evaluation lends further support for these findings in the context of a K-12 initiative in a very large urban school district."

As a senior program officer at the George Gund Foundation, Ms. Egbert works with other funders of health education and reproductive health services throughout the country. "The effort here in Cleveland is being watched across the country. There's nothing else like it," she said. "These results show we are moving in the right direction."

Funding for the K-12 programming was contributed by numerous entities, most significantly the Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners, the Cleveland Department of Public Health, and a number of local foundations.

The evaluation, conducted by nationally recognized Philliber Research Associates, was commissioned by the AIDS Funding Collaborative (AFC) in order to assess the impact of the programming on students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioral intent, and the support for the programming among public officials, school administrators and staff, and parents.

"The investment made by community leaders in this critical public health issue is to be commended," said Lauren Tews Harbert, AFC program director. "The AFC felt it particularly important to formally and comprehensively evaluate the program so that its impact and our community's investment in it can be documented and used effectively to inform future efforts to provide young people with the tools they need to prevent disease and pregnancy. The results of the evaluation were both impressive and positive."

Results of the evaluation document that after participating in the program:

- Students in 1st through 3rd grades reported they learned about good touch/bad touch, and what to do if someone tries to touch them inappropriately, and about respecting others;
- Students indicated they are more likely to behave responsibly, such as stating they would not allow themselves to be coerced into sex;
- High school students had significantly better attitudes regarding protecting themselves and their partners if and when they choose to engage in sexual activity;
- Parents and teachers overwhelmingly believe these lessons are important for their children and students.

The findings in this report will be used to further improve the implementation of the curriculum and other efforts to help young people make healthy choices. "This is a strong beginning," said Harbert. "These results show that it is imperative that we continue and expand this programming in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and beyond."

To receive a copy of the report, contact Jessica Gupta, 216-621-0766, ext. 282.