

LET'S GET IT ON

Oakland Youth's
New Vision for Sex Ed



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SEX ED THE CITY!

For the past 10 years, Forward Together (formerly Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice) has been supporting Asian youth in Oakland in becoming organizers and leaders for change in our communities. Through Forward Together, we have recently launched a new campaign in Oakland called Sex Ed the City: More Than Just Protection.

This project was birthed in 2011 when we learned about the state of our reproductive rights, and realized that a comprehensive sex education could address many of the core issues we face on a daily basis. With nearly half of U.S. high school students reporting that they've had sex, information and health care access are crucial to keeping young people healthy and safe. Young people account for nearly half of new STD cases reported every year, including an increase in HIV infections.

Comprehensive sexuality education can address a wide range of issues that affect the physical and emotional well-being of young people. Considering that three in four lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and

queer (LGBTQ) students report having been bullied at school, and nearly one in 10 California high school students report having been forced to have sexual intercourse, it is clear that the need for a sex education intervention is urgent. Research also shows that comprehensive sex education can be a positive influence for the overall academic success of students.

As a first step in the campaign, we developed a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project in spring 2012 to answer the questions: **What is the state of sex education in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)?** and **What do students want their sex education to look like?**

We found that students are overwhelmingly in favor of a comprehensive sex education that is inclusive of and relevant to LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, and English language learner (ELL) students. Yet 62% of surveyed OUSD students have spent no time on sex education during the 2011-2012 school year. With the data collected, we put together a list of recommendations that would bring change not only to our classrooms, but also to the larger campus climate, our homes, and the city of Oakland.

1

WHO DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO ABOUT SEX WHEN YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

FRIENDS
70%

HEALTH
CARE
PROVIDER
41%

PARENT/
CAREGIVER
34%

SIBLINGS
28%

TEACHERS
18%

NOBODY
11%

METHODOLOGY

As Forward Together youth, we have been the primary thinkers, writers, facilitators, and researchers throughout this project. With support from two UC Berkeley graduate students and a YPAR expert, we collected and documented over 500 surveys and conducted five focus groups of OUSD students.

- **Sample size:** We wanted a manageable and representative number of surveys, so we used a sample size formula to determine how many students we needed to survey to get a margin of error of 4-5% with a 95% confidence level. With 11,158 Oakland high school students (in 2010-2011), the target range was 372-570 surveys.
- **Respondents:** We drew participants from a sample that accounted for a variety of demographic factors among OUSD high school students. We accounted for variables such as gender, race/ethnicity, and school year. We also made sure we had representative numbers from the different sizes and types of Oakland high schools, conducting surveys in required classes to reach the most diverse range of students.
- **Process:** More than 500 students were asked to evaluate the sex education they have received, identify the sex education they want, and share their own experiences around sex, gender, relationships, and sexuality. We also facilitated and recorded five focus groups to get more qualitative data and hear directly from students.
- **Data management:** After data collection, all survey data was entered into SurveyMonkey and focus groups were transcribed.

Sex Ed the City: More than Just Protection is a project conceived of, created by, and executed by youth participating in Forward Together programs. For the past 10 years, Forward Together has been supporting Asian youth in Oakland in becoming leaders for change in our communities. This campaign is part of Forward Together's **Strong Families** initiative, a multiyear effort to create conditions for all families to thrive.

NINE KEY FINDINGS

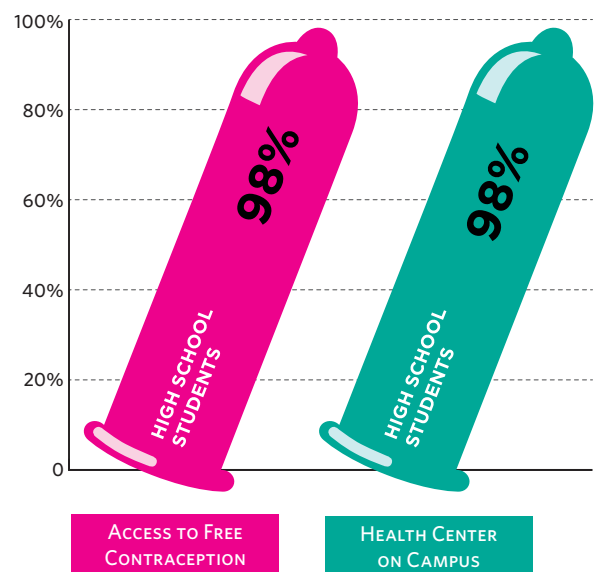
1. The majority of students spent NO time this year in a sex education class.

HOW MUCH TIME DO STUDENTS WANT TO SPEND ON SEX ED?



2. Students believe having comprehensive sex education in school is important to their lives, and they would like to spend more time on the subject.
3. Most students feel comfortable talking to friends about sex when they have questions (more than family, teachers, and health center staff/doctors). Students reported feeling least comfortable talking to teachers.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO BELIEVE THEY SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO FREE CONTRACEPTION AND STUDENT HEALTH CENTERS



4. Asian/South Asian and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students reported less communication with parents/caregivers about sex than Latino/Chicano and black/African American students.
5. In OUSD, both middle school and high school students received little to no sex education, but some middle school students have been sexually active and most want sex ed.
6. OUSD students believe that there should be free protection, contraception, and health centers at middle schools and high schools.
7. Students are not receiving curriculum that is relevant to LGBTQ students.
8. The impacts of not having relevant curriculum affect female and LGBTQ students the most. Furthermore, we need curriculum that specifically addresses gender and gender roles as a way to create a safer school environment.
9. Students are not being taught sex education that is useful/relevant to ELL students and students with disabilities.

SEX ED AND THE LAW:

California has great policy for sex ed, but our research shows its promise is far from realized.

California State sex education policy requires that sex education must (see SexEdTheCity.org for legal language):

- Be medically accurate, science based, and age appropriate
- Contain thorough information about condoms and contraceptives
- Provide information about when, how, and why to delay sexual activity, and teach healthy decision-making skills
- Be free of biases regarding gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity
- Be accessible to ELL students and students with disabilities

“Because I didn’t have access to sex education when I was younger, I made mistakes. But with Forward Together’s help, I look forward to a brighter future.”

—Corey Saechao, Forward Together Youth

“A lot of [LGBTQ] people have a hard time coming out to family and friends. It affects their school work; at school it’s hard for them to focus.”

—Focus Group Participant

“If the person feels they are LGBTQ...and they find the school teaching them about it...it’s going to make them feel more comfortable.”

—Focus Group Participant

“Growing up as a Filipino immigrant, culture is really big...so is religion. It was taboo to talk about sex....Sex was framed as a negative thing and [I] was not given...accurate science-based facts about sex.”

—Focus Group Participant

“Sex ed is important [so I can] be ready when I decide to have sex. I’ll be informed and have lots of information about my options.”

—Focus Group Participant

CONCLUSION

We found that students feel our current sex education curriculum is in need of radical transformation and change. Students want more accessible information in consistent and substantial classes, as well as through facilities such as health centers. Students also want relevant information for and about marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ community, ELL students, and students with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sex education justice is necessary and important because students have the right to resources that help them make safe and healthy decisions. We believe that comprehensive sex education is an integral part of creating “thriving students and healthy communities.” (This phrase comes from the OUSD Strategic Plan for 2011-2016.)

We are calling on OUSD decision makers and Oakland community members to create policy change, implement comprehensive sex ed curriculum, make sure students have access to reproductive health care

services, and ensure that school culture and communities are safe for young people to be themselves at all times.

NEXT STEPS FOR SEX ED THE CITY!

We will use social media, events, and workshops to support OUSD students in becoming advocates for change in their schools, families, and communities. Our social media strategy will keep young people up to date and involved. We'll be gathering and sharing stories directly from young people about how the issues of gender, bodies, sexuality, and relationships impact students' lives. Through visual art, photos, memes, film, poetry, and theater, we hope to share these stories and start a dialogue among teachers, school administrators, families, and students that changes the way we think about young people and their sexuality.

*All statistics are sourced in the complete *Let's Get It On* report. For supporting data and more information about the findings, please see full report at www.sexedthecity.org.

