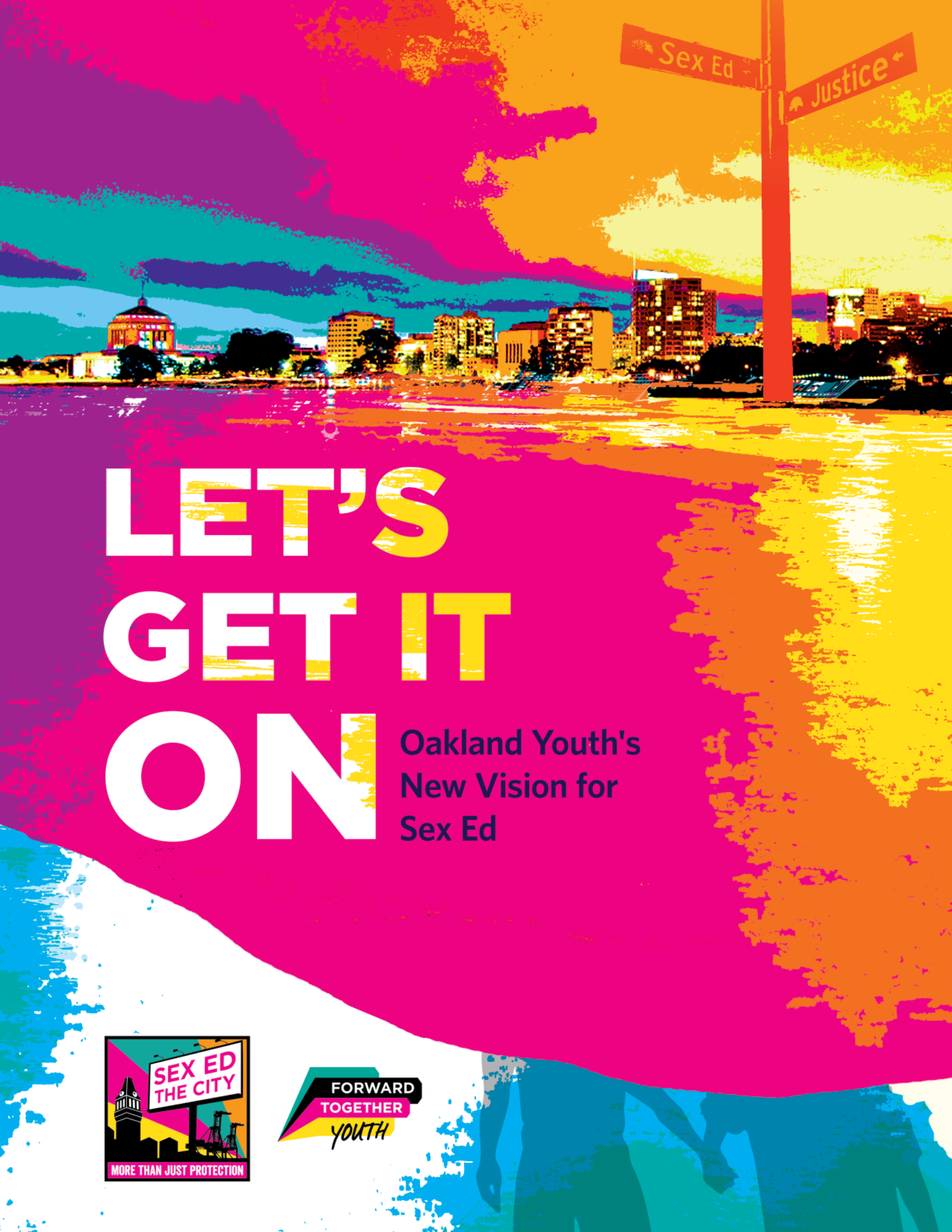


Sex Ed Justice



LET'S GET IT ON

Oakland Youth's
New Vision for
Sex Ed



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SEX ED THE CITY!

Forward Together (formerly Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice) is dedicated to making sure that when young people get it on, we have all the information we need to make the best decisions for ourselves. We are calling on Oakland Unified School District 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, ensure school culture and communities are safe for young people to be who they want to be at all times.

Forward Together has been supporting Asian youth in Oakland like us for the past 10 years 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 campaign is part of Forward Together's Strong Families initiative. A multi year effort to create conditions so that all families can thrive.

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?

To answer these questions, we collected over 500 surveys and conducted 5 focus groups of OUSD students. We found that students are overwhelmingly in favor of a comprehensive sex education that is inclusive of and relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students; students with disabilities; and English language learner (ELL) students. With the data collected, we put together a list of recommendations that would not only bring change to our classrooms, but also to the larger campus climate, our homes, and the city of Oakland.

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 our core daily needs. Reproductive justice is at the heart of Forward Together's work, as we all strive to ensure that every person has the power and resources needed to make healthy decisions about their gender, body, and sexuality. The Sex Ed the City campaign lives at that intersection of reproductive justice and young people's everyday lives and identities. This report launches a long-term campaign led by us, Forward Together youth, whose mission is to Sex Ed the City!

THE BENEFITS OF COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION

In the United States, young people's sexuality is a complex issue, which many schools attempt to address through sexuality education and health centers. With nearly half of U.S. high school students reporting having ever had sex¹, information and health care access are crucial to keeping young people healthy and safe. Gaps in education and access may contribute to high incidence and prevalence of disease among young people. For example, young people account for nearly half of new STD cases reported every year² and

have experienced an increase in HIV infections.³ Specifically, Alameda County has reported some of the highest rates of chlamydia among young people in the state⁴, with Oakland representing about 40% of those cases.⁵ Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control recently reported that $\frac{1}{3}$ of young people who were not using birth control before an unintended pregnancy believed they could not get pregnant.⁶ These statistics support that young people, including those in our community, lack basic knowledge to make informed decisions for themselves.



Ratema and Chrystal facilitate a workshop

Beyond the more direct consequences of sexual activity, comprehensive sexuality education also seeks to address a wide range of issues that affect the physical and emotional well-being of young people. More than 1 in 4 teenagers experience some type of bullying or harassment in school⁷, with those numbers skyrocketing to more than 3 in 4 LGBTQ students.⁸ If sex education and other curriculum better reflected the wide diversity of our student populations, that might also increase student physical and emotional safety. Moreover, nearly 1 in 10 California high school students report having been forced to have sexual intercourse,⁹ which mirrors national numbers.¹⁰ The City of Oakland has also reported the highest rate of domestic violence calls in Alameda County.¹¹ By incorporating curriculum that addresses issues such as healthy relationships and communication, schools could help youth like us develop skills to recognize and prevent these situations. For ultimate student well-being, sex education needs to include comprehensive information on the many aspects of life that interact with our sexuality, including gender norms, cultural issues, peer pressure, and body image issues.

Research shows that comprehensive sex education can also be a positive influence for the overall academic success of students.^{12,13} With a high

school dropout rate of 37%,¹⁴ Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has a large incentive to invest in innovative methods to keep young people in school and performing well. In addition, comprehensive sexuality education contributes to fewer unintended teen pregnancies than abstinence-only education.¹⁵ If fewer teens have unintended pregnancies, schools might have sufficient resources to help keep more young parents in school. Forward Together also advocates for services that support young parents in continuing their education.

Parents and caregivers of young people are a key component of comprehensive sex education, bridging the gap between our homes and schools. They can exert their influence to get and maintain high-quality comprehensive sex education in our schools. Although school officials often fear that a vocal minority might protest, the majority of California parents support comprehensive sex education for their children.¹⁶ Additionally, only about 1 in 3 high school students in OUSD reported having a recent conversation with their parents about sex or birth control.¹⁷ This suggests that more support and skill-building for communication with parents/caregivers could be a beneficial addition to our current sex education by increasing the resources young people have to make the best and healthiest decisions.

FORWARD TOGETHER'S YOUTH ORGANIZING PROGRAMS

Forward Together leads grassroots actions and train community leaders to transform policy and culture in ways that support individuals, families, and communities in reaching their full potential. Forward Together holds three youth organizing programs: SAFIRE, for young Asian women, a Young Men's Program, for young Asian men, and the newest addition Core, made up of seasoned organizers who have come through either SAFIRE or the Young Men's program. These programs gather 60-80 Asian youth each year—ages 14-20, from low-income, immigrant, and refugee families—and train us to be leaders and effect change around the issues that are important to us and our communities. They encourage us to develop our self-awareness and

claim our power to stand up for the long-term well-being of ourselves, our families, and our communities. All three programs operate year-round, including a summer session, and welcome new participants at different times throughout the year.

Forward Together's youth programs support us in learning more about what sex education is and can be and figure out ways to bring this learning to our schools, families, and communities. Together, we are leading a fierce, boundary-pushing campaign to ensure that all

Oakland students get a comprehensive sex education that has a reproductive justice framework and addresses their specific experiences. We've named it Sex Ed the City!

"It's important to contribute to the community, and Core is a way to say I was a part of something."

—Fiona Tang, Forward Together Youth Core Participant

"Everyone deserves to have sex education."

—Miranda Uong, Forward Together Youth

"I want to break down cultural barriers and open dialogue for sex ed."

—Priscilla Hoang, Forward Together Youth



"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

"The issues of sex education are issues that youth face every day."

—Amanda Wake, Youth Organizing Manager

"It's important to contribute to the community, and this campaign is a way to say I was a part of something."

—Fiona Tang, Forward Together Youth

OUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

As Forward Together youth, we have been the primary thinkers, writers, facilitators, and researchers throughout this project. YPAR projects hold youth as the experts when it comes to researching issues about our peers. Youth generate the research questions and the process, which we believe produces the most accurate and relevant data. An essential part of the YPAR process is that it leads to action that strengthens community. We are not doing the research and then leaving; we are doing the research so that we can act on it and positively impact our community.

Overview

During the spring 2011 Young Mamas campaign, SAFIRE learned about issues facing other young women in our community. When the Young Men's Program started in summer 2012, we realized that young men faced different, though often overlapping, issues. One of these intersections is the need for comprehensive sex education in our school district.

We led the development of a survey and focus group with support from Forward Together staff

and other adult allies. These tools were used to collect information from high school students in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to answer our primary research questions:

- **What is the state of sex education in the Oakland Unified School District?**
- **What do students want their sex education to look like?**

We developed a workshop called "Sex Education Justice," which we presented to students before giving them surveys and/or conducting focus groups. From there, we entered the survey results into SurveyMonkey and transcribed the focus group interviews before analyzing the data.

Sampling

We decided to collect data from high school students in OUSD, because we saw the need for better education at the schools we attended and wanted to know about experiences across the district. Also, these issues seemed to come up a lot more in high school than in middle school.

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. They divided this into four target numbers based on the proportion of students attending each school type.

High School Students in Oakland Unified School District vs. Surveyed Students		
	OUSD	Survey Sample
Total	11,158	491
Gender		
Female	50%	56%
Male	50%	43%
Transgender	Unavailable	1%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black, African American	32%	19%
Latina/o, Chicana/o	40%	36%
Asian, South Asian	13%	26%
White, Caucasian	8%	4%
Grade		
9 th	26%	21%
10 th	26%	32%
11 th	25%	23%
12 th	23%	24%
School Type		
Comprehensive (Big)	68%	78%
Small/Alternative	12%	8%
Continuation	6%	7%
Charter	14%	6%

To get a representative sample, we chose a wide variety of schools including large comprehensive, small alternative, continuation, and charter schools. Across these categories, we selected various schools and youth organizations as sites to conduct surveys and/or focus groups. We started with the schools and organizations already connected to the Forward Together Youth Organizing staff, but also aimed for a representative sample by looking at the school’s demographics (e.g.,

race/ethnicity) and location. In choosing classrooms to survey, we tried to reach a diverse range of students by going to required classes like advisory or language. Since we are all students, we also had to work around our own class schedules.

We were able to survey a group of OUSD middle school students at an Ethnic Studies conference in April 2012. Although we didn’t survey a representative sample of middle school students, we wanted to hear from additional youth in Oakland whose voices might have been left out of this case for comprehensive sex education. Also, this information could provide some support for a future research project in middle schools.

Below are the numbers from the data collection process:

- Total Surveys: 531
- High School Surveys: 491
- Middle School Surveys: 40
- Focus Groups Conducted: 5
- Focus Group Attendees: 32

Workshops

We created a workshop curriculum that explained sex education justice to other students and explained our rights under the California State Sex Ed Policy. We facilitated classroom presentations in six Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) high schools: Castlemont High School, Oakland High School, Skyline High School, Arise High School (charter school), MetWest High School (alternative school) and Dewey High School (continuation school), as well as the Middle School Ethnic Studies Conference. We also presented at six youth organizations: Let’s Chat!, Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC), Asian Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL), Da Town Researchers, Warriors for Peace, and OYEA. We utilized our workshops to distribute surveys to students. We worked hard to make sure that our workshop presentations fit in with and supported the schedules of teachers, counselors, and youth organizers.

Students by Schools Surveyed

	%	#
ARISE	6%	29
Castlemont	18%	88
Dewey	7%	36
Met West	8%	41
Oakland High	31%	150
Skyline	29%	144

Surveys

We chose to use surveys because they are a good way to get mass quantities of information in a short amount of time. Our surveys asked OUSD students about their experiences with sex education in school, as well as in their personal lives. We brainstormed different questions and put them into the following categories:

- About You (Demographics)
- Sex Education at Your School
- Your Sex Education Class
- Your Personal Experience

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 made sure to include questions about LGBTQ students, English language learner (ELL) students, and students with disabilities, to see if the curriculum reflected the diversity of students' lives. We piloted the survey several times and made many rounds of revisions with other young people and adults. (See sexedthecity.org for the actual survey)

Focus Groups

We facilitated and recorded focus groups to get more qualitative data and hear directly from students. Our focus groups went more in-depth about students' personal experiences around sex, gender, relationships, family communication, and sexuality. We conducted five focus groups with the following youth organizations: Sexual Minority Alliance of Alameda County (SMAAC), Asian Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership

(AYPAL), Warriors for Peace, and OYEA; and one focus group at MetWest High School. (See sexedthecity.org for the focus group questions)

Data Management

After data collection, all survey data was entered into SurveyMonkey and focus groups were transcribed. To analyze the data, we first identified themes in the survey data. From the themes, we pulled out findings that spoke to the gaps students are experiencing in regards to their sex education. Based on the findings, we developed recommendations as solutions to the gaps the research had revealed. From there, we went through the qualitative and quantitative data to find relevant statistics and quotes that supported our recommendations. Finally, we wrote a summary of what we and other students wanted sex education to look like in our classrooms, on campuses, and in our communities.

WE BELIEVE IN SEX EDUCATION JUSTICE

Sex education justice:

- Offers a view of sexuality and sexual health that includes positive body image, self-esteem, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental health, communication, and decision-making in relationships.
- Focuses on promoting the overall health of all people, including people of color, LGBTQ folks, people with disabilities, and immigrant populations.
- Maintains that sexuality is a core part of people's lives, not a side issue.

What IS sex education justice?	What ISN'T sex education justice?
Forms of contraception that are relevant to all genders and sexualities	Abstinence-only education
Inclusion of all pregnancy options (including parenting, abortion, and adoption)	Stigmatizing of teen pregnancy
Education about healthy/unhealthy relationships	Education for only people who are sexually active
Inclusion for all gender identities and sexual orientations	Reinforcement of gender roles
Relevant information for youth of color, low-income youth, lgbtq youth, and youth with disabilities	Education for heterosexual and able-bodied youth only
Emphasis on positive body image and self-esteem	Anti-choice/anti-abortion education
Workshops on consent and healthy communication	Consequence-based education

7

SEX ED AND THE LAW

California State Sex Education Policy requires that sex education that students receive 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 English learner students and students with disabilities

Focus Group at Met West High School



DATA ANALYSIS

Finding 1: Most students* spent NO time this year in a sex education class.

*Unless otherwise noted, "students" in this section refers to Oakland Unified School District high school students who responded to the survey question.

Supporting Data

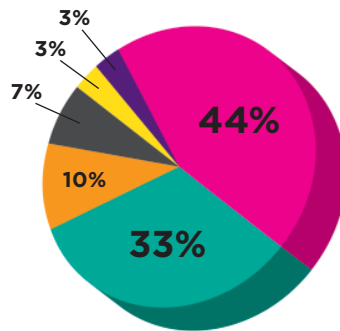
- 62% of students reported spending no time on sex education this year.
- Skyline and Castlemont have the largest amount of students who reported that they have not spent time in a sex education class (75% and 77%, respectively) this year.
- 43% of 9th grade students reported spending no time on sex education this year. (This is especially important because 9th grade is usually the year when students receive sex education.)

"You see a lot of people making mistakes [because they're] unaware of the possibilities that come with sex."

—Focus Group Participant

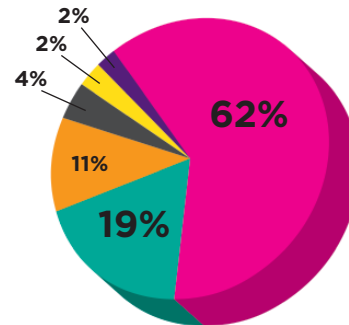
AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON SEX EDUCATION THIS SCHOOL YEAR

- No Time
- 1 week
- 2-3 weeks
- 1-3 months
- 2-3 weeks
- 1-3 months



9th Grade Students

This is the grade that many schools and districts teach sex education



Overall High School Students

Our Vision

Comprehensive sex education should not just be tacked on to the end of semesters. Instead, we want schools to dedicate a sufficient amount of time to sex education and integrate it throughout all related curriculum, as well as throughout the school culture.

Finding 2: Students believe having comprehensive sex education in school is important to their lives and would like to spend more time on it.

Supporting Data

- 75% of students believe having comprehensive sex education is important to their lives.
- 64% of students want to spend more time on sex education than they are currently spending in school.
- 1 in 3 students feel a lot more comfortable making decisions about their sexual activity because of their sex education class.

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



3 OUT OF 4 STUDENTS FEEL THAT COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR LIVES



1 IN 3 STUDENTS FEEL A LOT MORE COMFORTABLE MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT SEXUAL ACTIVITY BECAUSE OF SEX EDUCATION.



“We as students have rights! We have a right to know our own bodies and have access to information.”

—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

“We aren’t getting the education or resources we need from home. Everybody needs resources to receive a health education and understand health education. [Sex education] needs to be updated [and] culturally relevant so that young people are able to [understand] and [push] the boundaries [around] what we define as sex education.”

—Focus Group Participant

Our Vision

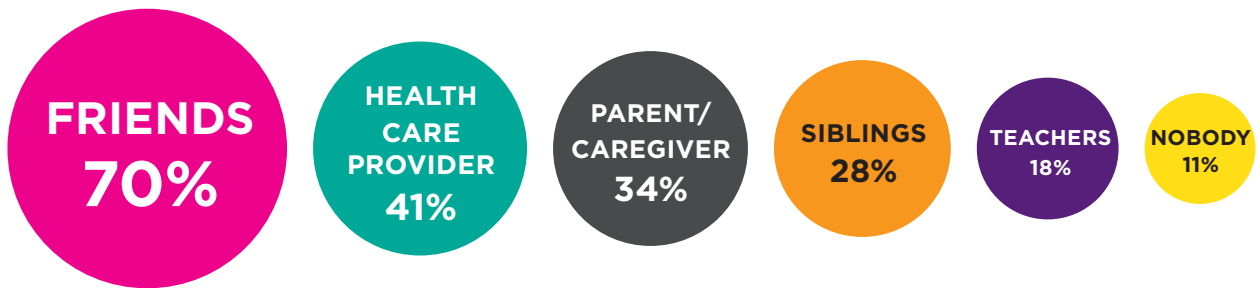
We envision comprehensive sex education for all students, including access to information relevant to gender, sexuality, bodies, and relationships. We also want classrooms, schools, and a community culture that allows students to feel safe and empowered to make healthy decisions regarding their identity and sexual health.

Finding 3: Most students feel comfortable talking to friends about sex when they have questions (more than family, teachers, and health center staff/ doctors). The fewest students reported feeling comfortable talking to teachers.

Supporting Data

- 70% of students feel comfortable talking to friends about sex.
- 41% of students feel comfortable talking to health center staff/ doctors; 34% to parents/caregivers; 28% to siblings; 18% to teachers.
- 11% of students reported having nobody they felt comfortable talking with when they have questions about sex.

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



“Mien culture. I never received [sex education] from my family at all. Not my sisters, brothers, or nothing. My culture does not mention sex, does not say if it is good or bad. For my parents it would be weird for them to give me information about the topic [of] sex. I think it’s just weird for parents to talk to their children

about sex. This influenced me when we faced peer pressure in high school. We would all peer pressure each other about sex. Someone I knew became a victim of [an] STI that open[ed] my eyes that...family and friends should talk to you about sex ed.”
—Focus Group Participant

Our Vision

Since students are less responsive to teachers who are judgmental, uncomfortable, or disengaged around the information they are teaching, we envision sex ed teachers who are enthusiastic and feel comfortable talking about complex and sometimes vulnerable topics like sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, condoms and other barrier forms of STI protection and pregnancy prevention, healthy relationships, and our bodies. We also want to foster a culture at school and in our communities where students are encouraged to talk openly to family, teachers, and doctors, and where adults know how to treat youth experiences with openness and respect rather than judgment.

Finding 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.*

**The survey question asked students to “Check all that apply” for the Race/Ethnicity question, so students may be double-counted if they checked more than one box. It was important that we allowed students to check more than one.*

Supporting Data

More than 1 in 3 Asians/South Asian students (40%) and Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students (33%) reported that their parents/caregivers did not talk to them at all about sex. In contrast, less than 1 in 4 Latino/Chicano students (24%) and Black/African American students (18%) reported not talking to parent/caregivers.

Our Vision

We envision sex education that is culturally relevant and speaks directly to student experiences related to race, ethnicity, and culture, debunking cultural stereotypes and myths so that all students are able to be their authentic selves without fear or judgment. We want sex education to equip youth with the tools to start discussions with their families. Furthermore, we believe youth of color benefit from teachers of color who can relate to and understand their experiences, especially when those teachers are open to sharing their personal experiences so students can learn from them.

“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

Finding 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.**

**These refer to the 40 middle school surveys received. It was important for us to include these students’ experiences and thoughts even though we didn’t have a representative sample of them.*

*** The survey defined “sexually active” as including intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, fingering and using sex toys.*

Supporting Data

- Roughly 60% of high school students and 80% of middle school students spent no time on sex education this year and would like a more comprehensive sex education program.
- Out of 15 sex education topics, 11 are covered in high school, while only 4 are covered in middle school, and neither covers sex education for LGBTQ, ELL, and disabled students. (“Covered” means that more than 50% of students reported learning about the topic.)
- 64% of high school and 84% of middle school students would like more time on sex education.

Our Vision

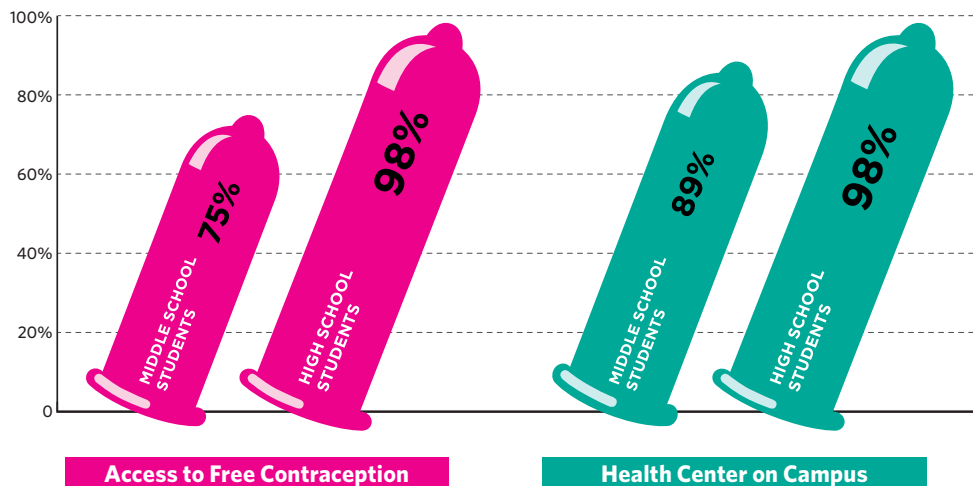
We envision middle school curriculum that covers comprehensive sex education issues such as sexual orientation and gender identity, and healthy and unhealthy relationships, so that students are prepared by the time they get to high school. We advocate for age-appropriate curriculum and teachers who are skilled in creating a classroom environment that is conducive to curiosity, learning, and respect.

Finding 6: OUSD students believe that there should be free protection, contraception, and health centers for middle schools and high schools.

Supporting Data

- 46% of high school students are sexually active or have been sexually active. The survey defined “sexually active” as including intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, fingering and using sex toys.
- Among the middle and high school students surveyed, 75% believe that middle school students should have access to free contraceptives and protection, and 98% believe that high school students should.
- Among the middle and high school students surveyed, 89% believe there should be a student health center at every middle school and 98% believe there should be one at every high school.

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



Our Vision

We envision opening health centers on all high school and middle school campuses so that students can ask questions and have access to resources that complement their comprehensive sex education, including access to condoms and other forms of barriers and protection.

Finding 7: Students are not receiving curriculum that is relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and transgender students.

Supporting Data

- 46% of LGBTQ students report that their parents/caregivers don't talk to them at all about sex ed, compared with 27% of straight students. (*Only 57 students identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning/unsure or other. It was important for us to include these students' experiences and thoughts even though we didn't have a representative sample of them.*)
- 63% of students in general aren't receiving education about sexual health for LGBTQ students.
- 54% aren't receiving education about sex orientation, gender identity, and gender roles
- 29% aren't receiving education about LGBTQ issues

“Being gay, I had to fight my way through school instead of getting my education like everybody else. I was violent. Even though going to school was supposed to be for learning.”

—Focus Group Participant

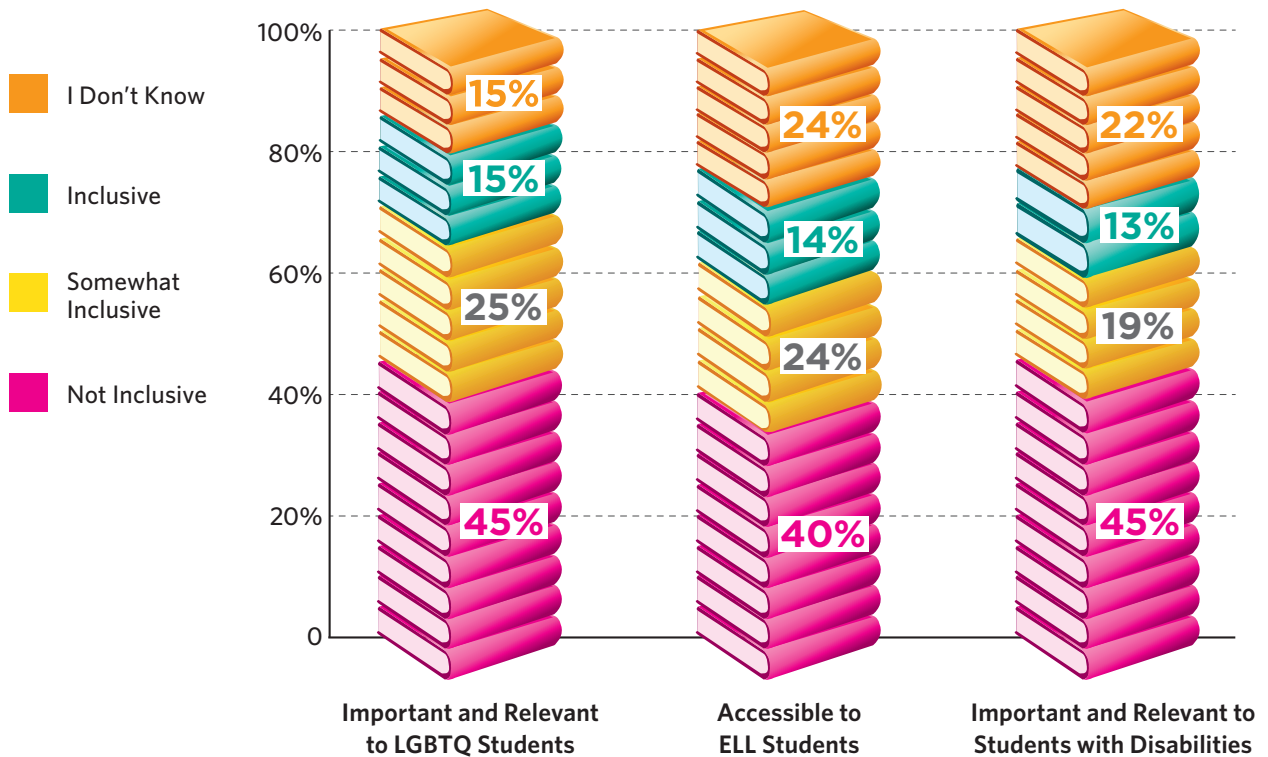
“If the person feels they are LGBTQ...and they find the school teaching them about it...it’s going to make them feel more comfortable.”

—Focus Group Participant

“Honestly, nobody ever told me it was wrong or whatever to call people ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ or ‘fags.’ I feel like in all my sex education classes it’s never [about] gays, it’s always straight.”

—Focus Group Participant

HOW INCLUSIVE IS CURRICULUM?



Our Vision

We envision all students benefiting from a broader, nonheteronormative curriculum that is fun and engaging and represents and reflects the experiences of all students. This curriculum will provide students with the language, tools, and understanding to be better allies to LGBTQ peers. The experiences of LGBTQ young people are honored and their leadership uplifted, so as to transform a homophobic and transphobic school environment into one of safety, diversity, and honest self-expression. Also, we want adults on campus to play a significant role in modeling being an ally and take initiative in addressing homophobia and transphobia in all of its forms.

Finding 8: Students are not being taught sex education that is useful/relevant to ELL students and students with disabilities.

Supporting Data

- About 40% of students reported that their sex education class provides little to no* information that is accessible to non-English speaking/ELL students.
- 45% of students are provided with little to no information in sex education class that is important and relevant to students with disabilities.

(*For these findings and the previous chart, “little to no” and “not inclusive” includes all the students that chose 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale when asked if their sex education included each type of information. “Somewhat inclusive” includes those who chose 3, and “Inclusive” includes those who chose 4 or 5.)

Our Vision

We envision sex education that is accessible in the primary language of its students, taught by teachers who can relate to students’ experiences. Schools will provide comparable comprehensive sex education to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities and their allies will be treated as experts on what the curriculum and implementation of a comprehensive sex education looks like.

“Everyone has the right to know their options.”

—Focus Group Participant

Finding 9: 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.

Supporting Data

63% of students think “sexual orientation, gender identity/roles” should be covered in sex ed.

“My guy friends have a hard time coming out. They focus on hiding themselves rather than focusing on education.”

—Focus Group Participant

“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. If you love a person then you should show the world.”

—Focus Group Participant

“I don’t know if this applies to all Mien people, but for my family, they don’t really talk to the girls until we’re old enough to have kids or something. They usually talk about sex to the guys, kinda like they’re really, really sexist. It’s the girls that [are] supposed to be with one guy and the guys [that] are supposed to take care of the girls. And they’re telling the guys to get as many asses as you can and the girls gotta stay pure.”

—Focus Group Participant

Our Vision

We envision classrooms that are well-facilitated safe spaces for students to ask questions. Both the curriculum and culture of the classroom actively discourages stigma, harassment, and discrimination around gender, gender expression, and sexual identity. Students, as well as teachers, are educated on the negative impacts of gender roles and expectations, and provided with the tools to combat their manifestations, both within themselves and their community.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are our specific recommendations to the Oakland Unified School District, school administrators, the campus health centers that are part of the Alameda County Health Department, community members and other decision makers. These recommendations fall into six categories: General; Curriculum; Qualified Teachers; Reducing Stigma and Creating Safer Space and Cultural Competency; Health Centers and Resources; and Community and School Culture.

A dedication to ensuring the implementation of a comprehensive sex education across all schools is a necessary component to a vision of strong families, thriving students and healthy communities.

General Recommendations

- Require that sex education will:
 - Comply with the California State Sex Education Policy that requires all sex ed that is being taught to be fully comprehensive (see pg 9).
 - Have a full semester dedicated to sex education and health for all 7th and 9th grade students.
 - Have age appropriate sex education and health taught starting in kindergarten and go to 12th grade.

Curriculum

- Create a comprehensive sex education program for middle and high school students that covers:
 - Sexual health information relevant to all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer students; gender nonconforming and transgender students; and students with disabilities
 - All contraception options
 - Types of barriers and protection for all kinds of sexual activity
 - Emergency contraception
 - Parent/guardian communication related to sex, sexuality, gender, and relationships
 - Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender roles
 - Body image, drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure, and harassment
 - Consent and healthy decision-making
 - Healthy/unhealthy relationships
 - Pregnancy options (parenting, adoption, abortion)
 - HIV/STI Prevention
- Make curriculum and teaching styles accessible and relevant to ELL (English language learner) students and students with disabilities
- Start a pilot program of comprehensive sex education with a process for student input
- Provide materials and workshops for parents that are translated and culturally relevant
- Adopt supplemental curriculum if a school's basic sex education doesn't cover all components of sex education justice

Qualified Teachers

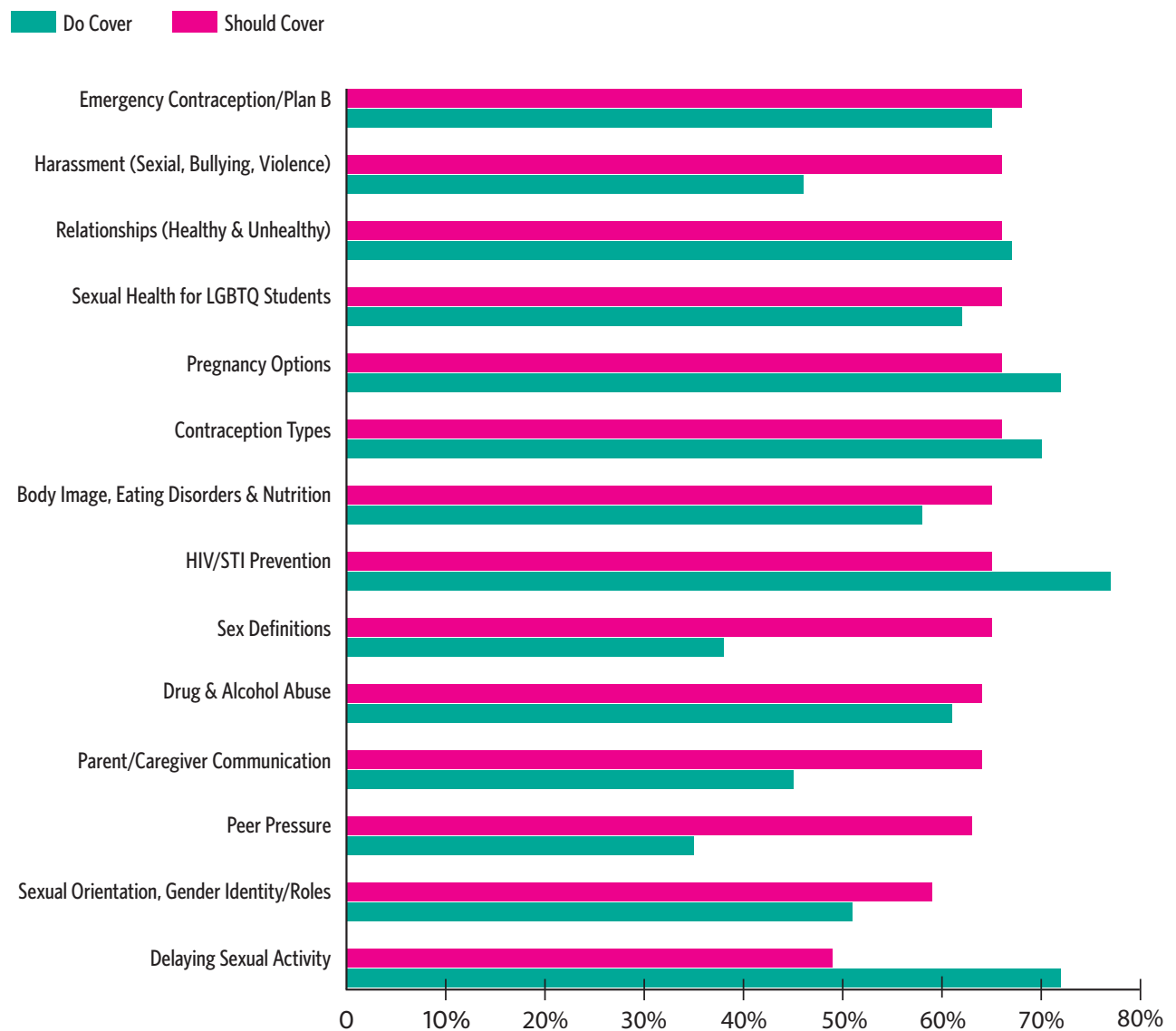
- Hire teachers for sex education classes that are well trained and feel comfortable with the topics they are teaching
- Train teachers in:
 - Awareness and addressing of homophobia, heterosexism, and issues related to gender identity
 - Awareness related to students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds
 - Offering empathy and honoring all students' experiences
 - Facilitating dialogues so that students are learning from each other
 - Bringing in experts as guest speakers.

- Make sure teachers don't teach subjects they are uncomfortable with
- Utilize trainers and educators who can teach specific sex education topics as guest speakers so that students can experience diverse perspectives
- Equip teachers with tools to support students around talking to family members and doctors more comfortably

Reducing Stigma and Creating Safer Space and Cultural Competency

- Train teachers, counselors, administration, and students in taking initiative around immediately addressing situations such as homophobia and bullying
- Provide on-site translators at school health centers for non-English speakers and provide brochures and other resources in various languages
- Train principals, school administrators, and teachers to be culturally competent around all issues related to sex education
- Include curriculum that is relevant to disabled and ELL students

SEX ED TOPICS: WHAT SHOULD BE COVERED VS. WHAT IS COVERED



Health Centers and Resources

- Create peer education programs and train youth to intern at the centers
- Hire full-time, qualified workers for on-site wellness centers
- Connect health centers to the classroom so that all students know what the health centers provide and the relationship can be built.
- Establish health centers for all OUSD middle schools and high schools
- Offer free barrier protection for all types of sexual activity (not just male condoms)
- Offer free pregnancy tests
- Offer free STD/STI testing
- Provide free and confidential support and information to students seeking abortion.
- Offer access to mental health providers and resources
- Increase collaboration with organizations that provide sexual and mental health resources

Community and School Culture

- Support students the sex education issues that students face everyday in their homes, in the community and at school like street harassment, peer pressure, violence, etc.
- Offer peer-to-peer training and education tracks
- Support parents around opening dialogue with their kids
- Educate and provide resources for parents of LGBTQ students
- Plan out sex education classes with information that is both relatable and understandable, to establish a nonjudgmental environment where students can learn and ask questions without fear
- Hire teachers who are not just willing, but actually enthusiastic to teach sex education classes, and who are able to create a safe and encouraging learning atmosphere
- Collaborate with community organizations, parents, students, and teachers
- Establish more peer-health clubs at schools
- Create a culture where administrators and teachers look to students for input and solutions
- Extend young parents the respect, support, and resources to thrive in class and on campus
- Integrate sex ed topics throughout all related curriculum, as well as throughout campus environment, rather than treating them as side issues



OUR ALIGNMENT WITH OUSD STANDARDS FOR QUALITY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS¹⁸

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 2011-2016. See endnote 18 for the reference.) We see the recommendations in this report as supportive of and aligned with the Quality Community Schools Development effort of the OUSD, specifically related to the following OUSD standards of a quality school:

Key Condition 2: Quality Learning Experiences for All Students

1. Provides students with curriculum that is meaningful and challenging to them
2. Provides safe and nurturing learning environments
4. Uses instructional strategies that make learning active for students and provide them with different ways to learn
7. Ensures that students know what they’re learning, why they’re learning it, and how it can be applied
9. Uses leadership and youth development curriculum and extracurricular content to engage students

Key Condition 3: Safe, Supportive, and Healthy Learning Environments

1. Is a safe and healthy center of the community, open to community use before, during, and after the school day
6. Creates an inclusive, welcoming, and caring community, fostering communication that values individual/cultural differences
8. Has clear expectations and norms of behavior and systems for holding students and adults accountable to those norms
9. Ensures that the physical environment of classrooms and the broader school campus supports teaching and learning

Key Condition 4: Learning Communities Focused on Continuous Improvement

6. Provides adult learning opportunities that use student voice and/or are led by students

Key Condition 5: Meaningful Student, Family, and Community Engagement/Partnerships

2. Shares decision-making with its students, their families, and the community, as part of working together in partnership
6. Provides opportunities for families to understand what their child is learning, why they’re learning it, and what it looks like to perform well
5. Creates and sustains equitable conditions for learning and advocates for interrupting patterns of inequities
7. Develops and sustains relationships based on trust and respect

NEXT STEPS FOR SEX ED THE CITY

With the data and recommendations from this report, we hope to influence Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) decision makers and community partners to implement policy change and program recommendations for a more comprehensive sex education in the classroom and a safer space outside the classroom for all students.

We will be organizing OUSD students through grassroots organizing including social media, events, and workshops to be 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 that changes the way we think about young people and their sexuality.

In September, we'll be lobbying in Washington D.C. for "The Real Education for Healthy Youth Act" (HR3324 and S1782) and against abstinence-only education in collaboration with other young people across the country who are also doing sex ed work. And this fall 2012 we'll help Get Out The Vote through voter education and voter outreach in Oakland, educating others youth about youth rights, Strong Families, and sex education justice. We will uplift the voices of young people during this election season because although many of us can't vote, it is important that those who can vote in line with youth on the issues that directly affect them.

FORWARD TOGETHER YOUTH REFLECTIONS

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My Sex Ed Looked Like...

"...a missing piece of the puzzle. I never had any sex ed taught in my schools. With peers and then from workshops the community offered. My sex ed looked heterosexual, ableist, and mainly broadcasted through what the media has to show." —*Forward Together Youth*

"... a condom on a dildo and a banana. Followed by a brief presentation and discussion on STDs and the production of sperm." —*Forward Together Youth*

I Wish My Sex Ed...

"...had more than information on how to put on a condom, [had] explain[ed] the types of contraception in detail, [and had] fun teachers who aren't shy and who can have fun giving us activities/exercises [that explain] sex for LGBTQ students. Because everybody goes through sex in life and when that time comes, it's important to know everything there is to know." —*Forward Together Youth*

"... was existent at my middle school instead of watching the miracle of life in horror and discomfort. I wish that there was a health class in high school because those are the years that the topic of sex is most prominent." —*Forward Together Youth*

Sex Ed Justice is Important to Me, My Family, and My Community Because...

"...it ensures that all students receive equal amounts of sex ed, a comprehensive one. One that includes useful information for the LGBTQ community, disabled, and ESL youth. Not only will including them make them comfortable in freely expressing themselves, but [it will also] help others be more accepting of them, too. Teaching about healthy and unhealthy relationships could help reduce rates of domestic violence and

teaching about body image will promote high self-esteem within insecure youth and make everyone better students.” —*Forward Together Youth*

“... it keeps young kids healthy and safe and allows them to live long lives and become outspoken leaders in the community to teach further generations.”—*Forward Together Youth*

LIMITATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

With more time, we could have learned about and used different methods to collect data. Also, working around many people’s schedules affected our ability to reach everyone we wanted to reach.

Although we did our best to get representation across the district, we could have sampled more schools (e.g., private schools, schools in North or West Oakland, middle schools) to get a better idea of what is offered. If we had more people conducting the presentations and more time to prepare for them, we could have helped more students understand our campaign. Also, we would like to have more representation by LGBTQ students, so we could have had more accurate data on their experiences.

We made a lot of tough decisions to develop a concise survey that would get at the heart of our research questions. In general, our survey and presentation were only in English, which may have affected people’s responses or understanding. In hindsight, we could also have changed some of the wording, so the questions were more clear. Some questions were skipped because students may have been bored, which led to a lower response on them. We could list the most important questions first to help their response rate. The layout of the survey was confusing for some students, so this could have affected responses on the sex education topics. In the future, we could focus more questions on what’s happening in schools to get a more in-depth understanding. Adding more questions regarding the disability community would also help us understand issues with access.

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CONCLUSION

Having comprehensive sex education will improve student’s academic success, create a more inclusive and safe campus environment for everyone and support students to be who they truly are at all times. Through our surveys and focus groups, 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, English language learners (ELL), and students with disabilities. And shockingly, a whopping 62% of surveyed OUSD students have never taken a sex education class in 2012. Sex education justice is necessary and important because students have the right to have resources that help make safe and healthy decisions.

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