“Why Is Sex Education Necessary?"

As a future health instructor, I believe that sexuality education is a necessary and key component of the health education curriculum. Humans are sexual beings, and no health education program is or can be complete without sexuality education. An unknown author states that “if you want success, take charge of your health” and “without health, few, if any, of life's goals will be met.” The goal of sexuality education is to give students tools and information so that they will be equipped to take responsibility for their sexual health. With accurate, complete information, they can make good, responsible decisions regarding their sexual health. They will therefore be more likely to succeed in school and in life. It is clear that comprehensive sex education programs, or abstinence plus programs, give youth the necessary tools to succeed.

Comprehensive sex education teaches that sexual behavior is a natural, normal, healthy part of life. (Advocates For Youth) It is regarded as a part of life youth need to prepare for and know about. Youth need to know how to differentiate between love and infatuation, how to use contraception to avoid an unplanned pregnancy, how to make responsible choices, how to say no, and how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STI’s). While comprehensive sex education encourages youth to delay sexual intercourse because abstinence is the best form of protection for avoiding pregnancy and diseases, it recognizes that youth have choices in regards to sex. They
can choose to have sex, and if they do, they need to know how to protect themselves. Comprehensive programs recognize that youth are sexual beings, and will be adults one day, so it teaches more than abstinence. It teaches youth how to be responsible sexual beings.

Those in opposition to comprehensive sex education would argue that teaching anything other than abstinence until marriage leads to unfavorable outcomes. Among these are unplanned pregnancies and STI's. These two outcomes are viewed as inevitable if premarital sex is engaged in. This view seeks to “scare” youth into compliance by citing the inaccurate failure rates of condoms at 12-40%. (Advocates For Youth) Condoms, however, if used correctly and consistently, do protect against an unplanned pregnancy and have a failure rate of only 2%. (Berne, 1995 p. 231) Countries in Europe such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, teach comprehensive sex education and do not have as high a teenage pregnancy rate as the United States does. In fact, the United States has a teen birth rate 4-11 times higher than these countries. (Advocates For Youth) Citing condoms as not being effective protection against STI's is a fallacy, for they do indeed offer this protection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, condoms were shown 100% effective in stopping the passage of HIV. (Berne, 1995 p. 231)

Advocates of abstinence only education contend that teaching about contraception will encourage youth to begin sexual activity. Studies
show, however, that youth have sex before they start using contraception—they don't try to utilize effective contraception until after they have already been engaging in sexual activity for 6 - 18 months. Teaching youth effective decision making skills and about contraception has been shown to actually help them delay having sex, not make them engage in it. (Berne, 1995 p. 230) It is better to teach teens how to handle sexual situations instead of telling them to avoid them at all costs. It is clear that youth need to be taught more than “abstinence only” and “sex is dangerous” in order to make good sexual decisions.

Abstinence only programs teach youth to avoid sex and caution them as to its dangers; they do not teach youth about contraception and condom use for STI protection. In contrast, the majority of Americans, 89%, believe that it is important for young people to know about how to use contraception and avoid STI's. (Advocates For Youth) I believe the limited way abstinence only programs teach sexuality puts youth at risk for unplanned pregnancy and STI's. Comprehensive sex education, on the other hand, gives youth a complete education about sexuality, an education that includes information about contraception and STI prevention. It teaches the many aspects of sex, abstinence and responsibility among them.

Sexuality education teachers, working along with parents and other sources of guidance for youth, such as church leaders, together can give youth the best comprehensive sex education possible. A broad, positive,
life enhancing (in other words, comprehensive) way of teaching our youth about their sexuality will better prepare them to make responsible decisions. They will be healthy sexual beings, now and in the future.

**Sources**


Adolescent Sexual Health in Europe and the U.S.—Why the Difference?
http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/factsheet/fses_t.htm

Sex Education Programs: Definitions & Point-by-Point Comparison
http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/m/definitions.htm