

An  
Evidence-Based  
Program

# Draw the Line

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## *Respect the Line*

**Setting Limits to Prevent  
HIV, STD and Pregnancy**

Grade  
**6**

University of California, San Francisco  
Center for AIDS Prevention Studies  
and  
ETR Associates

**ETR**  
Associates



# Introduction

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**Pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease (STD), including HIV, are serious problems for youth in the United States.**

Despite adequate knowledge about how pregnancy and STD transmission occur and how to prevent them, many adolescents continue to put themselves at risk through sexual behavior. When questioned, young people will often comment that sex “just happened” and was not planned.

In the past, many youth waited to engage in sexual behavior until their late teens or early twenties. Today, increasing numbers are having sex before age 16. These youth are particularly at risk because:

- They are less likely to use a condom or other contraceptive than those who initiate sexual activity at an older age.
- They are more likely to have sex in coercive circumstances.
- They are more likely to have a large number of sexual partners as adolescents.

In addition, many young people may have difficulty believing there are good reasons to wait. They see youth in the media having sex without consequences; they witness parents and other adults who are sexual but not in stable, committed relationships; and they wonder why they themselves shouldn't be sexually active.

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## **Curriculum Overview**

**The *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* curriculum helps students develop personal sexual limits and practice the skills needed to maintain those limits when challenged.** Healthy sexual limits will keep youth safer from HIV, other STD and unplanned pregnancy.

This 19-lesson curriculum is designed to be used either by a classroom teacher or trained family life educator in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

- **In Grade 6**, the emphasis is on situations in which youth may be pressured to steal, use alcohol or smoke. The 5 lessons feature limit setting and refusal skills in a nonsexual context.

- **In Grade 7**, pressures regarding sexual intercourse are considered. The 7 lessons feature short-term consequences of unplanned sex, information about sexually transmitted disease, and applying refusal skills in a party context.
- **In Grade 8**, the 7 lessons feature an HIV-positive speaker, practicing refusal skills in dating contexts, and a condom demonstration.

## Underlying Principles

### **The curriculum is based on numerous principles:**

- **Not having sexual intercourse is the healthiest sexual limit for students in middle school.** Avoiding sexual intercourse (and the situations that might lead to it) in middle school and beyond protects students from STD and pregnancy, as well as from the social, emotional and health consequences of early intercourse.
- **Students can set sexual limits.** Students often believe sex “just happened,” when, in fact, they can decide what their sexual limits are and maintain these limits. The curriculum asks students to decide on their personal sexual limits, and gives them the experience of having a limit and maintaining it in the face of pressure.
- **Students can be motivated to maintain their limits.** For students to maintain a sexual limit, they must be motivated. The best motivations will be highly personal and meaningful to the individual student. The curriculum encourages students to think about the immediate emotional and personal consequences of having sex, (e.g., embarrassment, worry, hurt feelings) as well as the long-term consequences of pregnancy, HIV and other STD.
- **Students will encounter challenges to their limits.** Challenges to sexual limits can take many forms, including coercion, internal desires and peer pressure. The lessons give students an opportunity to identify and consider how to deal with situations, pressures and feelings that could threaten their ability to maintain sexual limits.
- **Students can overcome challenges to their limits.** Communication skills and greater self-awareness can help students overcome many or most challenges to their sexual limits. Students’ interpersonal skills are developed through the use of roleplays and other skill practice. Lessons also address intrapersonal skills (e.g., self-monitoring, or paying attention to one’s own thoughts and feelings) for maintaining sexual limits.

Unique Features  
of the Curriculum

- **Students who respect the limits of others will be less coercive.** In addition to learning to overcome pressure, the curriculum also helps students avoid pressuring others. The theme of respecting others' limits is reflected throughout the lessons.
- **Each student has unique needs.** In any classroom, there will be students who have very little sexual experience or knowledge and students who already have been exposed to a great deal. Office hours and an anonymous question box help address the unique problems and circumstances of individual students.
- **Condom use is essential protection for those who are sexually active.** Because some middle school youth are having sexual intercourse, the Grade 8 lessons include basic information about condoms, including how to use them.

**Kirby identifies 10 characteristics shared by successful HIV prevention and sex education curricula\*.** Each of these characteristics is true of the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* curriculum.

- 1. Narrow focus.** *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* has the specific focus of helping youth develop and maintain healthy sexual limits to reduce their risk for HIV, other STD and unplanned pregnancy.
- 2. Theoretical foundation.** The curriculum is based on several social psychological theories, particularly social inoculation theory and social cognitive theory. It also draws on emerging research findings that suggest that youth at highest risk have been abused and that coercion is frequent in youthful sexual encounters.
- 3. Clear and appropriate messages.** The curriculum's primary message is that postponing sexual activity is the best choice for youth in middle school. The program therefore encourages students to set limits around sexual activity, not have intercourse, and not risk intercourse by getting into situations where sex is possible or tempting. However, because some youth will choose or be coerced into sexual activity, a secondary message of the program is that condoms must be used for intercourse to reduce the risk of HIV, other STD and unplanned pregnancy.
- 4. Basic, accurate information about risks of unprotected intercourse and ways to avoid intercourse or use protection against pregnancy and STD.** This curriculum provides basic facts about transmission of HIV and other STD and information about how to use a condom.

\*Kirby, D. 2001. *Emerging answers: Research findings on programs to reduce teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

**5. Lessons on social pressures that influence sexual behaviors.**

The curriculum includes lessons that help students overcome challenges to their sexual limits, including pressure from a partner and other possible influences, such as their own physical desires.

**6. Modeling and practice of communication and negotiation skills.** A major focus of the curriculum is on the development and practice of skills involved in limit setting, including communication of one's limits and the ability to protect those limits.

**7. Teaching methods that involve participants and help them personalize the information.** The curriculum makes extensive use of small group discussion, roleplays, stories, games and other approaches designed to involve students actively in the learning process and help them connect the learning to their own lives.

**8. Behavioral goals, teaching methods and materials appropriate to the age, sexual experience and culture of the students.** The curriculum's basic assumption that postponing sexual activity is the best choice for youth in middle school is clearly a developmentally appropriate goal. The Grade 6 lessons feature skill development related to nonsexual issues because so few youth are sexually experienced at that age. In Grades 7 and 8, skills are practiced in relationship contexts (e.g., at parties or when dating). To enhance appeal and relevancy, the materials are highly interactive and use a story-based approach whenever possible.

**9. Sufficient length of time.** *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* includes approximately 19 hours of instruction across 3 grade levels.

**10. Supportive and trained educators for program implementation.** For the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* study, family life educators were hired and trained to implement the program. Classroom teachers interested in implementing this program should be skilled in using interactive teaching methods and guiding group discussions, and should be comfortable with the program content.

In addition to these characteristics, the program is sensitive to the needs of Latino youth. *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* was designed to be implemented in schools with large numbers of Latino youth, and these youth were consulted frequently during development. The student materials are provided in both English and Spanish because of the large number of schools that have bilingual classrooms.

## How the Curriculum Was Developed

***Draw the Line/Respect the Line* was developed as part of a research project funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (MH51515).** In this study, 19 schools were randomly assigned to either receive the curriculum or continue with usual classroom activities regarding HIV, other STD and pregnancy prevention. Ten schools received the curriculum, provided by specially trained family life educators.

## Pilot Testing

**The researchers and educators involved in this project spent several years developing and pilot testing the curriculum.**

Students in focus groups provided information about how youth think and feel about sex, as well as feedback about lesson ideas.

Each lesson activity was tested initially in schools not formally part of the study. Then various activities were revised, and additional piloting of the lessons occurred. Finally, full sets of lessons for each grade were taught at 10 or more classrooms in another school district and final revisions were made. Student feedback was used throughout the process to improve the lessons and make them enjoyable.

## Evaluation and Results

**The evaluation of the curriculum involved surveying students in the 19 study schools who had received parental consent to participate in the study.** Surveys were completed before students received the program in grade 6, and at the end of grades 7, 8 and 9.

The curriculum was effective in delaying sexual initiation for boys, but not girls.

### **Results from the evaluation study:**

- Boys who received *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* were significantly less likely than boys in the comparison group to initiate sex, had significantly greater knowledge, perceived fewer peer norms supporting sex, had more positive attitudes toward reasons for not having sex, had stronger sexual limits, and put themselves in fewer situations that could lead to sexual behaviors.
- There were no significant differences for girls except regarding peer norms. Girls receiving the curriculum perceived fewer peer norms supporting sex than girls in the comparison group.

The surveys indicated that almost 30% of girls in grade 8 in the study had a boyfriend 2 or more years older, and that these girls

were more likely to report having had sex. It's possible that more instruction on the influence of older boyfriends on sexual behaviors, and more skill practice in handling potential power differentials and possible coercion may help improve the results for girls.

*Note:* For more information about the curriculum and the theories that support it, see: Marin, B. 1999. Draw the Line/Respect the Line: A curriculum to prevent sexual risk. In *Psicología al fin del siglo/Psychology at the end of the century*. Invited addresses from the XXX Interamerican Congress of Psychology. Caracas, Venezuela: Interamerican Society of Psychology. Available at website: [www.caps.ucsf.edu](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu).



# How to Use the Curriculum

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## Teaching the Curriculum

**This curriculum can be used by either classroom teachers or community-based educators. Each lesson includes:**

- an overview of activities
- lesson objectives
- a list of preparatory steps
- approximate time required for each activity
- detailed steps for implementing each activity
- supporting materials (e.g., student worksheets, roleplays, etc.)

Materials preparation is somewhat intensive, but students greatly enjoy the variety of activities.

## Use by Classroom Teachers

### **Teachers who implement this program should:**

- Have knowledge of the content areas covered in the curriculum.
- Be comfortable discussing the material.
- Have experience in using interactive teaching strategies such as roleplaying.

During the evaluation study, this curriculum was taught by trained family life educators; however, classroom teachers can implement it themselves.

Classroom teachers have the advantage of being familiar with their students and able to maintain discipline. In some cases, however, seeing the teacher as an authority figure may make it more difficult for students to freely express their questions or views about sex. Students also will often say things to challenge teachers or make them uncomfortable, just to see their reaction.

It's important for classroom teachers implementing the curriculum to plan how they will react to difficult situations and to be aware of district policies about what can and cannot be said about sex in the classroom.

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**Use by Outside Educators**

**Community-based educators who implement this program** should also have knowledge of the content areas, be comfortable discussing the content, and have experience using interactive teaching strategies.

To be most effective, outside educators should plan a pre-implementation meeting with the classroom teacher to discuss logistics and support. They may also want to observe the classroom prior to teaching the curriculum to get to know the students and how they interact in the classroom. The use of student name tents is built into the lessons to help outside educators learn the students' names.

**At the pre-implementation meeting, educator and classroom teacher should:**

- Introduce themselves.
- Confirm implementation dates.
- Verify that all students have parental consent to take part.
- Discuss how the teacher can assist during implementation.

**Classroom teachers can assist outside educators in the following areas:**

- **Maintaining discipline in the classroom.** Ask the teacher for a copy of the classroom rules.
- **Participating in roleplays.** Give or show the teacher copies of the demonstration roleplays. These roleplays are models for the students and are best presented by two adults rather than a student and an adult.
- **Offering credit for completing parent-child homework activities.** Because enhancing parent-child communication is one of the goals of this curriculum, there are some homework activities in which students are asked to talk with their parents or another adult. Ask the teacher to offer classroom credit or points for completing the homework activities, or to utilize some other type of reward system to encourage students to complete the homework.
- **Reinforcing the messages of the curriculum.** Classroom teachers can enhance the potential impact of the program by asking students about what they've learned and reinforcing curriculum messages between lessons, if the lessons are not consecutive, or after the lessons have been completed.

Encourage the teacher to watch for incidents in which students are faced with drawing the line, and take advantage of these teachable moments to introduce discussion about setting limits and factors that make it difficult.

(*Note:* ETR Associates' Training Department trained the educators who implemented the curriculum during the evaluation study. Schools or agencies interested in training for this program can contact the Director of Training at ETR Associates to discuss specific training needs at [training@etr.org](mailto:training@etr.org).)

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### **Answering Student Questions**

**Students may have potentially sensitive questions regarding the topics covered in the curriculum.** Two different approaches were used in the evaluation study to provide students with an avenue for asking individual questions—office hours and anonymous questions.

#### Office Hours

**During the evaluation study, health educators offered office hours during which they were available to students after class for discussion, questions, skill practice and/or referrals.** Office hours were held during lunchtime once or twice a week, either in an office or on the schoolyard. Office hours were available during the time the program was taught and for a few weeks following.

Office hours may be difficult to implement due to logistics and/or lack of resources, but schools and agencies that can use this approach will provide students with more support and greater opportunities to connect with caring adults who can help them address important issues in a safe environment.

Using a consistent office site that is not associated with discipline (e.g., detention) is best. During the evaluation study most students came to office hours in pairs or small groups.

**A variety of methods can be used to create an environment that fosters dialogue and allows students to feel safe:**

- **Providing games, such as cards, chess or dominos.** While playing games, students frequently asked questions or engaged the educator in conversations that dealt with the curriculum topics.
- **Answering anonymous questions in small groups.** The small groups either compiled the anonymous questions or previously asked questions were used.

- **Offering a “boys’ day” and “girls’ day.”** This strategy was aimed at students who might be uncomfortable asking a question in a mixed-gender group.
- **Educators circulating on the campus.** Talking with students one on one or in small groups offered access to a great number of students.

Issues that commonly emerge during office hours may include school issues, same/opposite sex relationships, sexuality questions, questions about methods of protection and processing reactions to the HIV positive speaker. Some students may disclose more serious situations such as abuse or suicidal behavior. Anyone teaching the program should be aware of the school’s reporting policies before beginning to teach the curriculum.

## Anonymous Questions

**The seventh and eighth grade lessons make use of a question box.** The anonymous question technique allows students to ask sensitive questions they might not ask otherwise because of embarrassment or fear of being perceived as too naive or too experienced.

To formalize the anonymous question process, the curriculum includes opportunities for students to write questions at the end of selected lessons. During these lessons, every student in the class is given a 3" x 5" card and asked to write a question about the material being covered in the curriculum.

If students do not have a question they can simply write “hello” on the card. In this way, it will not be obvious which students are writing questions. Educators or teachers should collect the cards, screen the questions and prepare answers.

### **Questions can be addressed in the following ways:**

- Questions that relate to specific lesson topics (e.g., STD) can be held for the day of the topic.
- If a question pertains to information that has already been presented, turn the question back to the students and have them answer it as a review.
- Time for addressing anonymous questions is most typically included at the end of lessons. But some educators may choose to begin a lesson by addressing questions.
- Accept all questions. Questions that are too explicit or graphic can be recast to address the underlying issue.
- Questions about the educator’s personal life should not be answered.

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**Adapting the Curriculum for Special Needs**

Certain populations such as special education and bilingual students are often overlooked in prevention programs. *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* has been taught fairly extensively to students with diverse needs. The following suggestions and adjustments can be made to make the lessons more appropriate for students with special needs.

**Special Education**

**The key modification for special education students is to reduce the focus to a few simple concepts.** In the evaluation study some writing activities were shortened or eliminated. Educators also repeated information more often and increased use of visuals. Worksheets can be completed as a whole group, instead of individually. If 2 teachers are available, the class can be divided into 2 small groups.

**Bilingual Classrooms**

***Draw the Line/Respect the Line* was evaluated in ethnically diverse districts.** The curriculum was taught in bilingual and monolingual Spanish classes, and in English Language Development classes that combined multiple languages (i.e., Vietnamese, Tagalog, Hmong, Chinese, Korean and Spanish). One class was conducted in sign language for hearing impaired students. All worksheets and key visual aids were developed in English and Spanish.

One key modification for these classes is to slow the lesson pacing, using translation from teachers and/or aides as needed. In some cases, scenarios may need to be modified for less acculturated students who have limited exposure to refusal skills and prevention topics.

Another useful technique is to group students who need translation at one or more tables, limiting the group size to 5 or fewer, and assign a teacher's aide or student volunteer to sit with these students and translate for them. Students with limited English should be encouraged to participate in the discussions through translators. Students also should be encouraged to write and act out roleplays in their native languages.

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**Securing Parent Notification and Permission**

**It's essential to inform parents and guardians regarding the nature and scheduling of the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* program.** Requirements for parent notification vary by local school district and state. Review school district policies, and work with them to follow established procedures.

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A “passive permission” letter that can be modified and used by a school is provided on pages 7–8. The letter should be printed on school letterhead and include the principal’s signature.

A parent preview night should be planned to give parents an opportunity to see the curriculum materials and meet the teachers. During the meeting, parents should receive a copy of the Lesson Outline for the grade their child is in (see pages 9–10), and be given an opportunity to experience some of the learning activities, if possible. Parent-child homework assignments also should be described and the value of completing these assignments should be emphasized.

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## Videos

**During the evaluation study, a few of the seventh- and eighth-grade lessons were augmented with videos or video clips.**

- **Grade 7** used a video in Lesson 1 that showed young people discussing pressures middle school youth face and what makes it difficult to resist these pressures. A video about STD was used in Lesson 5.
- **Grade 8** used a video in Lesson 1 that featured interviews with young people infected with HIV to help personalize the motivation for drawing the line in sexual situations.

Videos are not included with the curriculum because they become dated and may not meet the needs of a particular school or district. Teachers can use current, school-approved videos to emphasize key points when using this program.

# Sample Notification Letter

(on District or School Letterhead)

Dear Family:

This year, your son or daughter will be offered a program called *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* in his/her \_\_\_\_\_ class. This program helps students learn ways to prevent HIV infection, other sexually transmitted disease (STD), and pregnancy. The lessons emphasize that choosing not to have sex is the safest choice.

In sixth grade, students will receive 5 lessons. The lessons do not directly talk about sexual behavior, but focus on peer pressure and how to resist it. In both seventh and eighth grades, students will receive 7 lessons. Students will learn and practice ways to resist pressure to have sex. Communication and decision-making skills will also be taught.

The *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* program includes several homework activities to help parents and children talk about personal limits. We hope you will work with your child on these. This homework is voluntary and students will not share their parents' answers in class.

You are welcome to preview the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* materials. Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at the school, and we will arrange a preview time and answer any questions you may have about the program.

A student may be excused from any part of this program.

If you do NOT want your son or daughter to take part in any portion of this program, you must fill out the form at the end of this letter and return it to school by \_\_\_\_\_.

We will arrange a different learning activity for your child.

If we do not hear from you, we will assume you allow your child to take part in the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* program.

Sincerely,

Principal

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I, \_\_\_\_\_

do NOT want my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_

to take part in the *Draw the Line/Respect the Line* program. I understand that he/she will be given another learning activity during this time.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note:* You do NOT need to return this form unless you do NOT want your child to take part in the lessons.

## Sample Notification Letter (Spanish)

Estimada familia:

Este año, a su hijo o hija le ofrecerán en la escuela un programa que se llama *Marca los límites/Respetar los límites*. Este programa enseña diferentes maneras de prevenir la infección con el VIH, otras enfermedades de transmisión sexual, y el embarazo. El mensaje principal de estas lecciones es que la mejor decisión es no tener relaciones sexuales.

En el sexto grado, los estudiantes reciben 5 lecciones. Estas lecciones no tratan directamente el tema de la conducta sexual sino la presión que pueden estar recibiendo de los amigos y cómo resistir estas presiones. En los grados 7 y 8, los estudiantes reciben 7 lecciones. Los estudiantes aprenderán y practicarán maneras de resistir las presiones para tener relaciones sexuales. También aprenden diferentes maneras de comunicarse.

El programa *Marca los límites/ Respetar los límites* incluye varias tareas que ayudan a padres e hijos a conversar acerca de límites personales. Esperamos que la familia pueda ayudar a su hijo/hija con estas actividades. Estas tareas son voluntarias y los estudiantes no comparten las respuestas de sus padres con el resto de la clase.

Ustedes pueden revisar los materiales del programa. Favor de contactar a \_\_\_\_\_ en la escuela para arreglar una cita para mostrar los materiales y contestar cualquier pregunta o dudas que ustedes tengan.

Todos los estudiantes tienen derecho a no participar en el programa.

Si ustedes NO quieren que su estudiante participe en el programa, llenen el formulario que aparece al final de esta carta y devuélvanlo a la escuela antes del \_\_\_\_\_. Arreglaremos otra actividad para su hijo/hija.

Si ustedes no llenan o no envían el formulario, entenderemos que su hijo/hija puede participar en el programa *Marca los límites/Respetar los límites*.

Cordialmente,

Director(a)

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NO doy permiso para que mi hijo/hija \_\_\_\_\_ participe en el programa *Marca los límites/ Respetar los Límites*. Entiendo que durante ese tiempo podrá participar en otra actividad.

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

*Nota:* No es necesario devolver este formulario si ustedes desean que su hijo/hija participe en el programa.