Key Concepts Guide

Key concepts are main ideas. They convey big-picture ideas. “Birth control is good at preventing pregnancy” and “Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how” are both key concepts, to name just a few.

Focusing on key concepts is a strategy for achieving deeper learning, utilized throughout the field of education. It grows out of efforts to cultivate lasting understanding. For educators teaching sexual health education, employing this approach often involves a shift in practice towards sharing a significantly smaller number of sexual health facts, and putting a new and greater emphasis on conceptual frameworks.

This guide provides key concepts for several sexual health education topics. The key concepts are aligned with the behavioral goals of FLASH, and likewise, are based on the most current research on the prevention of teen pregnancy, STDs, HIV and sexual violence. For pregnancy, STD and HIV prevention, in particular, they align with well-established risk and protective factors, identified by researcher Doug Kirby.

We hope that educators will find this guide helpful in providing meaningful and effective sexual health education to their students.
# Index to Age-Appropriate Key Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puberty</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control</td>
<td>Middle and High</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STDs and HIV</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STDs and HIV</td>
<td>Middle and High</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstinence</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstinence</td>
<td>Middle and High</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Violence</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Violence</td>
<td>Middle and High</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Middle and High</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Puberty Key Concepts

Elementary School

Puberty is when a person’s body and feelings change from a child’s into an adult’s.
- When people finish going through puberty, they are physically able to start a pregnancy. This doesn’t mean that they are ready to be a parent.
- Some people start having more intense crushes during puberty.
- Some people start having sexual feelings during puberty.
- Puberty is an exciting time for lots of people.

Puberty is very similar for boys and girls.
- Most of the changes of puberty happen to everyone, regardless of gender.
- A few changes happen only to boys or only to girls, such as periods for girls and ejaculation for boys.
- Male and female bodies are mostly the same. The main difference is their reproductive system.

People’s bodies can look very different from each other, but are still normal and healthy.
- All different types of physical changes during puberty are normal, including different heights, weights, breast sizes, penis sizes, amounts of acne, voice changes, etc.
- People go through puberty at their own speed and when the time is right for their body. Puberty usually happens sometime between ages 8 and 18.

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.
- It is not OK to hurt other people or be mean to them.
- It is not OK to make fun of other people’s bodies.
- It is not OK to bully or tease people because of how they are going through puberty, or because they seem different than you.
Birth Control Key Concepts

Elementary School

Birth control is a way to prevent pregnancy.

Most adults use birth control at some point in their life.

There are lots of different kinds of birth control.

Birth control is very safe.
Birth Control Key Concepts

Middle and High School

**Birth control is good at preventing pregnancy.**
- Using ANY method of birth control is much more effective at preventing pregnancy than using none.
- Emergency contraception is the only birth control method that prevents pregnancy after sex.

**Condoms are good at preventing pregnancy, STDs and HIV.**
- Condoms are the only birth control method that also protects against STDs and HIV.
- Using a condom plus another effective birth control method provides even better protection against pregnancy.
- Condoms give men an opportunity to take an important role in preventing pregnancy, HIV and STDs.

**Birth control is very safe.**
- All methods of birth control have less health risks than pregnancy and childbirth.

**Many teens successfully use birth control.**
- In Washington State, teens can get birth control without their parent/guardian’s consent.
- In this community, teens can get birth control at *(insert name)* clinic.
STD and HIV Key Concepts

Elementary School

People can prevent getting HIV and giving HIV to other people.
- People can prevent getting or giving HIV by not having sex. (See abstinence key concepts, p. 8)
- People can prevent getting or giving HIV by using a condom if they do have sex.
- People can prevent getting or giving HIV by not sharing needles.

Kids your age almost never catch HIV.
- The behaviors that spread HIV, like having sex and sharing needles, are not things kids do.
- You can’t catch HIV by being around someone who has HIV.

HIV is a very serious illness that eventually causes death.
- People who have HIV can live for a long time with the help of a doctor.
- HIV is a type of STD.

An STD is an illness that people catch from having sex with someone who already has it.
- Doctors can help people get better from most STDs.

It is important to treat people who have HIV or other STDs with respect.
STD and HIV Key Concepts

Middle and High School

HIV is a very serious illness that eventually causes death.
• People who have HIV can live for a long time with the help of a doctor.
• HIV is a type of STD.

An STD is an illness that people catch from having sex with someone who already has it.
• The most common way to get an STD is by having sex without a condom with someone who already has an STD.
• Some STDs, including HIV, are spread by sharing needles.
• Some STDs, including HIV, are spread from mother to baby, through pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.
• Lots of teens have STDs.

You can prevent getting HIV and other STDs.
• It is very important for teens to protect themselves from HIV and other STDs.
• People can prevent getting HIV and other STDs by not having sex. (See abstinence key concepts, p. 9)
• People can prevent getting HIV and other STDs by using a condom if they do have sex.
• People can prevent getting HIV and other STDs by not sharing needles.
• People cannot catch HIV or other STDs from casual contact, like holding hands, sharing drinks, or kissing.

Many teens successfully use condoms.
• Almost all teens who have sex have used a condom at some point.
• Condoms are easy to get and easy to use.
• Condoms give men an opportunity to take an important role in preventing pregnancy, HIV and STDs.

The only way to know if you have HIV or other STDs is to get tested.
• Most people who have an STD, including HIV, do not have any symptoms.
• You can’t tell if people have HIV or other STDs by looking at them.
• There are many people who have HIV or other STDs but don’t know they have them.
• In this community, teens can get tested for HIV and other STDs at (insert name) clinic.
• In Washington State, teens are not required to get anyone’s permission to get an HIV test.

It is important to treat people who have HIV or other STDs with respect.
Abstinence Key Concepts

Elementary School

Abstinence is choosing to not have sex.
- There are 3 main kinds of sex: oral, anal and vaginal.
- Oral sex is when one person’s mouth goes on another person’s genitals; anal sex is when a penis goes in someone’s anus (butt); and vaginal sex is when a penis goes in someone’s vagina.

There are times in everyone’s life when abstaining from sex is the healthiest choice.
- People choose not to have sex for lots of important reasons, including their health, future plans, religious beliefs, waiting for the right person, and not being old enough.
- Kids your age should not have sex.
- Abstinence is not just for kids and teens. Many adults choose to be abstinent.

Choosing abstinence means a person does not have to worry about pregnancy or STDs.
- Abstinence is a 100% effective way to not get pregnant or catch an STD.
- Women get pregnant from having vaginal sex with a man.
- People can catch HIV or other STDs from having oral, anal or vaginal sex with someone who has HIV or an STD.
Abstinence Key Concepts

Middle and High School

Most high school students are abstinent.
- Abstinence means choosing not to have oral, anal or vaginal sex.
- Oral sex is when one person’s mouth goes on another person’s genitals; anal sex is when a penis goes in someone’s anus (butt); and vaginal sex is when a penis goes in someone’s vagina.

There are times in everyone’s life when abstaining from sex is the healthiest choice.
- People choose not to have sex for lots of important reasons, including protecting their health and their goals for the future, because of their religion, or because they are waiting for the right person.
- Most teens and adults choose abstinence at different times in their life.
- People of every sexual orientation choose abstinence—gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight.
- People who have had sex before choose to be abstinent.

Choosing abstinence means a person does not have to worry about pregnancy or STDs.
- Abstinence is a 100% effective way to not get pregnant or catch an STD.
- Teens who are not having sex still need to learn about birth control and STDs, so they can be healthy in the future and so they can help their friends.

Teens who choose not to have sex have many strategies to help them be abstinent.
- It’s important for people to talk with their partner(s) about whether or not they want to have sex before they are in a sexual situation, but it is never too late to talk about it.
- It is helpful for people to know for themselves the important reasons they are choosing abstinence.
- Avoiding alcohol and other drugs makes it easier to be abstinent.
- It is helpful to have friends who support the decision to abstain from sex.
- It is helpful to avoid situations where sexual activity is more likely, such as being home alone with a boyfriend or girlfriend.
Sexual Violence Key Concepts

Elementary Concepts

**Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.**
- Adults should never touch kids on their genitals, bottoms or breasts unless that adult is a doctor or that adult is helping them bathe or dress.
- You shouldn’t have to let someone hug or kiss you if you don’t want to.

**It is never OK to touch someone, or make someone else touch you, if they don’t want to.**
- It is not OK to trick someone or talk them into touching.
- You shouldn’t hug or kiss people if they don’t want you to.

**There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl. There are no “girl things” or “boy things.”**
- It is not OK to make fun of boys for doing things that are thought of as “girl things,” or to make fun of girls for doing things that are thought of as “boy things.”
- People have a lot of ideas about what boys and girls should be interested in that just aren’t true. Boys and girls are interested in all different kinds of things.

**Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.**
- It is not OK to hurt other people or be mean to them.
- It is not OK to bully or tease people because they are different than you.
- It is not OK to make fun of other people’s bodies.

**If kids have been touched in a way that made them uncomfortable, it is important for them to tell a grown-up who can help.**
- If you find out that a friend has been touched in this way, it is important to help your friend find a grown-up to tell who will help.
- If you tell a grown-up that you need help and they don’t help you, find another grown-up to tell. Keep telling until you get help.
Sexual Violence Key Concepts

Middle and High School

Everyone has the right to say who touches their body and how.
- You don’t have to let anyone touch you, no matter who that person is.

It is never OK to touch someone else if they don’t want you to, or to make them touch you.
- It is never OK to trick or pressure someone into sexual activity.
- It is not OK to touch people in a way that makes them uncomfortable.

If person has been sexually abused or raped, it is important to tell an adult who can help.
- If you find out that a friend has been sexually abused or raped, it is important to help your friend find an adult to tell who will help.
- There are professionals who can help someone who has been raped or molested to stay safe and to feel better.
- When people are raped or molested, it is not their fault.
- Lots of guys and girls have been molested or raped when they were kids or teenagers. It happens more often than people think.
- Being raped or molested does not change someone’s sexual orientation – it cannot “make someone gay” or “make someone straight.”

There are laws about sex that everyone must follow.
- Having sex with someone who is much younger than you is against the law.
- Having sex with someone without getting consent is against the law.
- Adults are not allowed to have sex with kids or to touch them in sexual ways.

There are lots of ways to be a guy or a girl.
- U.S. society teaches us things about how men and women should act that are not true and that can actually harm people.
- It is not OK to make fun of guys for doing things that are thought of as “girl things,” or to make fun of girls for doing things that are thought of as “guy things.”

Consent is permission or agreement to engage in sexual activity.
- Having sex with someone without getting consent is against the law.
- It is not consent if people agree to sexual activity because they were pressured or forced.
- People who are drunk, high or asleep cannot give consent.
- People have to get consent even if they are dating or married.
- Both guys and girls need to give and get consent in all sexual encounters.
- Getting consent for one type of sexual activity does not mean you have consent for other sexual activities.
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Key Concepts

Elementary School

It is important to treat everyone with caring and respect, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their family members.
- It’s not OK to tease or be mean to people because they are gay or someone in their family is gay.

Kids’ families are made up of people who are of all sexual orientations.
- Most people have gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people in their family.
- Some people have parents who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

There are lots of ways to be a boy or a girl. There are no “girl things” or “boy things.”
- It is not OK to make fun of boys for doing things or wearing colors that you may think are just for girls, or to make fun of girls for doing things you may think are for boys.
- People have a lot of ideas about what boys and girls should be interested in that aren’t true. People are interested in all different kinds of things.

People can’t change their sexual orientation.

You can’t tell if people are gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight by looking at them.
- People have lots of ideas of what straight people and gay people look and act like that aren’t true.
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Key Concepts

Middle and High School

People know that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight because of how they feel, not because of whom they have sex with.
- People do not need to have sex to know what their sexual orientation is.
- Having sex with someone of another gender does not necessarily mean someone is straight, nor does having sex with someone of the same gender necessarily mean that someone is gay.

Gender expression doesn’t determine sexual orientation.
- Sometimes it is hard to tell if someone is a girl or a boy by looking. That doesn’t mean this person is gay.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight teens need to learn about birth control and STD prevention.
- At some point in most people’s lives they need to know about how to prevent pregnancy and STDs, for themselves or for a friend.

Science doesn’t know why people develop their specific sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Most scientific organizations think that sexual orientation and gender identity are already formed at birth.
- People with all sexual orientations and gender identities have existed throughout history.