

# How to Use This Curriculum Guide

New York State public schools are mandated to provide a minimum of five HIV/AIDS lessons per year to students in Grades K-6 and six HIV/AIDS lessons per year to students in Grades 7-12. Each of this guide's six lessons for Grades 7-12 comply with the New York State Education Commissioner's Regulations requiring that students be taught about the nature of HIV/AIDS, the methods of transmission, and the methods of prevention, and that abstinence be stressed as the most effective and appropriate method of prevention. These lessons also focus on risk reduction skill building, on HIV/AIDS resources and services, and on the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our society. Please note that some lessons may be taught over more than one class period.

Magnify the impact of the lessons by giving students ample opportunities for review, reinforcement, reflection, and practice of risk-reduction skills. To help you expand your HIV/AIDS instructional program, this guide includes additional optional lessons (including information on peer education), teaching strategies, and vocabulary and concept-building activities, as well as classroom guides and a teacher's glossary.

## Instructional Program for Special Education

The Office of School Wellness Programs (OSWP) has produced the film "Vulnerable and Capable: Adapting HIV/AIDS Lessons for Students with Disabilities," as well as additional video and print resources, all available on a single disc. Created and distributed by OSWP, this work responds to the citywide—and national—need for professional development materials that enable administrators and teachers to identify and respond to special education students' need for targeted HIV/AIDS education.

"Vulnerable and Capable" is a professional development film on HIV/AIDS education adaptation and best practices for teachers of physically, developmentally, and emotionally challenged students. The film features classroom lessons led by three teachers within District 75, the citywide special education district, interspersed with interviews on adapting and modeling lessons from the curriculum. The disk also includes adaptations for hearing impaired and visually impaired students, adaptations using assistive technologies, lesson plans from the three featured teachers and more.

These resources are available to the public at no charge. For the film go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/FitnessandHealth/StandardsCurriculum/VC-Intro.htm>. OSWP offers free professional development training specifically for special education teachers on ways they can adapt the lessons for their students. Teachers receive a copy of the Vulnerable and Capable DVD. For more information on receiving a copy of the DVD or attending a special education training, send an email to [wellness@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:wellness@schools.nyc.gov).

Some people with developmental disabilities have cognitive limitations that require a multi-sensory mode of learning. They may not understand abstract concepts; rather, concepts must be concretized. The materials used need to be modified to the cognitive levels of these students, and the lessons must include their active participation. With this in mind, examine the lessons carefully before attempting to teach students with disabilities. Such preparation will help ensure that students will understand how to protect themselves from HIV infection.

## How to Reinforce HIV/AIDS Lessons All Year Long

Because HIV/AIDS prevention is so important for students, a teacher may reinforce HIV/AIDS lessons beyond the required number of lessons. Some ways to do this are:

- Teach these lessons in conjunction with the health education lessons (in elementary school, lessons are taught throughout the year. In middle and high, the OSWP recommends teaching the required health education course, including the mandated sexual health education content, in 6th or 7th grade for middle school, and in 9th or 10th grade for high school. This sequence assures that students learn about human sexuality prior to learning about the risks associated with sexual behaviors.
- Teach one or more of the optional lessons, strategies, and activities in this guide.
- Review HIV/AIDS facts with periodic question-and-answer games, myth-fact activities, and quizzes followed by discussion, and student-generated questions.
- Have a question box in the classroom so that students can submit questions anonymously. Periodically, share questions with students and ask them to answer when appropriate. Review questions privately and prepare answers prior to going through them with the class. Rephrase questions for clarity, if inappropriate language is used, or if a student's phrasing may breach the student's or someone else's confidentiality.

- Ask students to bring in HIV/AIDS-related newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, and anecdotes to promote discussion of sexual choices. Encourage students to discuss why abstinence is the safest and most appropriate choice young people can make and to support one another in that decision.
- Have students engage in role-playing and other expressive activities that teach and reinforce decision-making and assertiveness skills. Opportunities to use such skills confront students every day. Students need ample practice and support to strengthen these vital skills. Utilize appropriate, effective videos that reinforce abstinence, discuss risk-reduction methods, and promote attitudes and values for positive behavior

**Teacher Note:** Role-playing is an effective way to help students internalize and express risk-reduction concepts. See Appendix B, “Classroom Teaching Tips,” for guidance on processing role-plays.

- Have students make a year-long dynamic project of a bulletin board display or mural about medical advances in treating HIV/AIDS. Especially for students who have a relative with HIV/AIDS or who are themselves infected, this can be an ongoing source of hope.
- Establish a productive relationship with a qualified community-based organization that helps people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHWA). Invite its representatives to speak to your students about community resources. (See Appendix B, “Classroom Teaching Tips.”) In turn, work with the organization to involve students in an ongoing volunteer project, such as visiting PLHWA. Not only can such activities give students the satisfaction of helping others, they can also acquaint students with resources in their own community that could be valuable to their own families and friends.
- Keep students in touch with current local, national, and international events pertaining to HIV/AIDS. Encourage students to discuss, debate, and write letters to officials about such issues as HIV testing, abstinence, condom availability in high schools, and the need for increased funding of drug rehabilitation programs and HIV/AIDS support programs.
- Encourage students to educate their peers about HIV by creating theater pieces, posters, or classroom presentations. Peer education can be a powerful way to harness peer pressure as a positive force. In fact, young people who teach their peers are more likely to modify their own behavior to avoid HIV.
- Have students read poems, articles, or stories that deal with HIV/AIDS issues to enhance their knowledge, interest and concern.
- Have students write their own poems, articles, stories, stage or radio plays, songs, etc.
- Assign HIV/AIDS Vocabulary and Concept-Building Strategies (see special section following lesson plans) for homework or as in-class or small-group activities, either in conjunction with HIV/AIDS lessons or to reinforce HIV/AIDS concepts throughout the school year.

## Teachers Can Help Save Lives

Teaching students about HIV/AIDS can be one of a teacher's most valuable contributions to their lives. Especially during a time when many young people may be, or are likely to become, sexually active, teachers can help them to challenge the assumption that having sex signifies maturity, and to affirm that learning to behave responsibly is the key to maturity. Whatever teachers' personal feelings are, they should recognize that HIV/AIDS education is not only necessary, but can be a positive learning experience.

Abstinence, because it protects students from HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy, is the most responsible choice for young people. Reinforce the fact that most high school students are not having sexual intercourse. Let students know that even if they have had sexual intercourse, they can choose to be abstinent. Similarly, help students understand that avoiding alcohol and other drugs is crucial to healthy living and avoiding pregnancy as well as infection with HIV or other STIs.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic touches all students' lives. Use this guide to help them make sense of an important health issue and to help prevent them from becoming infected themselves. Request further training, assistance, or copies of HIV/AIDS-related regulations from the New York City Department of Education's Office of School Wellness Programs. See our website at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/wellness>.

Please share comments and suggestions on this curriculum guide to facilitate revision of future editions. Write to:

[wellness@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:wellness@schools.nyc.gov)

or

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