



REAL Essentials is evidenced based. It is designed to include constructs components, and characteristics of effective programs based on research and educational and child pedagogy best practices.

The Tested Effectiveness of REAL Essentials

REAL Essentials has been using a pre- and post-test with positive results of change in attitude, knowledge and intent. Based on pre post preliminary results, the initial assessment of the REAL Essentials curriculum highlights immediate impact among participating youth as demonstrated by percentage increases and statistically significant favorable shifts ranging from 4.2% to 22.8% with p values <.01%.

In Weld County, Colorado County Commissioner David Long, former president of the Colorado Health and Human Services Commissioner Board, investigated the effectiveness of the REAL Essentials program with the research team at the Weld County Department of Health. The written conclusion states; "Weld County's teen fertility rate has decreased by 25% since 2000 with the implementation of the Weld WAITs program using REAL Essentials." This data was taken from the Colorado State Health Department 2009 profile for Weld County, Colorado.

Nationally, a version of REAL Essentials has shown effectiveness in two recent evaluations, one published and one unpublished. The first published study commenced in Miami, Florida under the direction of Project U-turn incorporating materials from the REAL Essentials curriculum (2004) targeting African American and Hispanic youth located in neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of teen pregnancy and STIs. The program was implemented in school and church settings. Some initial findings demonstrate that youth who were sexually active before the program indicated an increase in their ability and skills to return to a risk avoidance choice and remain committed to not having sex while they are a teen. "For youth who have had sexual intercourse prior to the program, McNemar's change test compared the percentage that had sexual intercourse within the last three weeks at pretest and post-test. At post-test, there was a significant reduction in the number of students that had sexual intercourse within the last three weeks from 31 to 19 (26.2% to 16.2%, McNemar test, $p=.020$). Of the 19 youth that had sexual intercourse within the last three weeks at post-test, 17 (89.4%) used a condom or other form of contraception." (*Journal of Youth Ministry, Vol 8, No. 1, Fall 2009*).

Additionally, an unpublished evaluation in Earle, Arkansas was set up as a quasi-experimental design using a matched comparison group in the 2008-2009 school year with the cohort receiving a version of the REAL Essentials curriculum. The two initial findings stated, "The program did not demonstrate statistically significant impacts on sexual initiation rates. The program did make significant reductions in sexual activity and multiple partners." The REAL Essentials curriculum

has been studied and evaluated with moderate to high successful findings but not in a rigorous randomized control group evaluation. Additional information is available upon request.

REAL Essentials is in alignment and compliance with 10 important standards:

1. REAL Essentials meets the criteria for the new Colorado Health Education Guidelines and Standards.
2. REAL Essentials is aligned with the 17 Characteristics of Effective Programs and the CDC Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT).
3. REAL Essentials meets the CDC Sexual Health Guidelines as outlined in the Healthy Youth Sexual Health Guidelines Report which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/sexualbehaviors/guidelines/guidelines.htm>, This report states: *School systems should make programs available that will enable and encourage young people who have not engaged in sexual intercourse and who have not used illicit drugs to continue to abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage. For young people who have engaged in sexual intercourse or who have injected illicit drugs, school programs should enable and encourage them to stop engaging in sexual intercourse until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage. Any health information developed by the Federal Government that will be used for education should encourage responsible sexual behavior—based on fidelity, commitment and maturity, placing sexuality within the context of marriage. Any health information provided by the Federal Government that might be used in schools should teach that children should not engage in sex and should be used with the consent and involvement of parents.*
4. REAL Essentials is aligned with the 9 target areas found consistently in the adolescent health literature to help students delay sexual debut, which are:
Target #1—Enhance knowledge of:
 - a) Physical development and sexual risks
 - b) Personal relationshipsTarget #2—Support personal attitudes and beliefs that value sexual risk avoidance
Target #3—Improve perception of and independence from negative peer and social norms
Target #4—Build personal competencies and self-efficacy to refuse sex
Target #5—Strengthen personal intention and commitment to avoid sexual involvement
Target #6—Identify and reduce the opportunities for sexual involvement
Target #7—Acknowledge and address common rationalizations for sexual involvement
Target #8—Strengthen future goals and opportunities
Target #9—Partner with parents
5. REAL Essentials is aligned with the parameters of Colorado State Regulatory Guidelines, specifically HB 1292 and HB 1081
6. REAL Essentials meets the criteria for the National Health Education Standards.
7. REAL Essentials is aligned with the criteria for age appropriate messaging and cognitive development skill building, as well as positive youth development and asset-building approaches.
8. REAL Essentials has been through a rigorous medical accuracy review from the United States Health and Human Services; Administration for Children and Families medical team and has been certified as medically accurate.
9. REAL Essentials aligns with what most parents say they desire for their children (see “National Survey of Adolescents and Their Parents Report”).
10. REAL Essentials is designed on sound theoretical frameworks for child pedagogy and educational best practices.

In addition, a version of REAL Essentials was evaluated by an independent educational evaluator whose preliminary findings are:

- Pre-post data demonstrates statistical significance from pre to post-tests within 26 items which represent the following categories: Peer Self-Esteem, Communication, Attitudes about Sexual Risk Avoidance, Knowledge, Behavioral Intentions and Present and Recent Behavior.
- Based on pre-post preliminary results, the initial assessment is that REAL Essentials is demonstrating immediate impact among participating youth as demonstrated by percentage increases and statistically significant favorable shifts ranging from 4.2% to 22.8% to increase knowledge, change attitudes and intent towards early sexual debut.
- Present results are encouraging and reflect the goals of this program.
- REAL Essentials has met its aim to educate and support teen decisions to postpone sexual activity in preparation for a lifetime committed relationship commonly known as marriage.

The curriculum also meets the guidelines of comprehensive sexuality education because the REAL Essentials curriculum content used in many school districts comes after the reproductive science lesson and before the contraception information given by the school nurse or by the content in the school district curricula.

The Center for Relationship Education has also created a supplemental curriculum that outlines healthy family formation and family planning strategies which imparts medically accurate information regarding contraception, condoms and other family planning devices.

The Specific Measurable Goals of REAL Essentials

There are eight measurable goals for this curriculum:

- Increase the age of onset of sexual debut
- Reduce the number of sexual partners
- Reduce sexual activity
- Increase the number of teens who are willing to commit to risk avoidance and primary prevention
- Increase the number of previously sexually active teens who are now choosing risk-avoidance behaviors
- Increase the number of teens who can articulate the benefits of lifetime committed love / marriage, and safe and stable families
- Increase the number of students who graduate from high school
- Increase the number of students who articulate that they have the skills and strategies for life, love, leadership and employment success

The Behavioral Objectives of REAL Essentials

REAL Essentials has four behavioral objectives. It is our goal and belief that upon successful implementation of this curriculum, students will:

- Demonstrate increased knowledge of content of curriculum
- Articulate a positive attitude about future relationship, family, employment and life success
- Articulate an intention to not engage in high risk behaviors that might undermine their future success

The following tools can be used to measure the progress of reaching the specific goals and behavioral objectives of **REAL Essentials**:

- Pre and post-tests
- Class surveys
- Youth-risk behavior surveys
- Grades and evaluated class assignments

- Student reports
- Student projects
- Observation/role plays
- Interviews
- Testimonials
- Follow up
- Community/school baseline data
- Comparison of behavioral differences in program implementation group and control group

The Effectiveness and Evaluation of REAL Essentials:

REAL Essentials integrates the key parts of effective programs, such as:

1. The focus on reducing sexual and other high risk behaviors
2. Clear messages about early sexual activity and ensuing consequences
3. Accurate information about risks
4. Skill building and tools to help students avoid sexual and other high risk behaviors
5. Addressing social pressures and perceived social norms
6. Addressing critical thinking skills around the media and cultural messages, as well as marketing campaigns targeting teens
7. Teaching methods to involve participants and help personalize information
8. Incorporation of behavioral goals, teaching methods and materials that are culturally competent, linguistically relevant, evidence based, age appropriate and medically accurate
9. Lasting a sufficient length of time to complete important activities
10. Selecting teachers or peers who believe in the program and then providing quality training and professional development opportunities for those individuals
11. Continued professional development, technical assistance, support, follow up, monitoring and evaluation
12. Showcases healthy marriage as the ideal family structure for future children based on research
13. Includes a pledge and affirmation of commitment to abstain from alcohol, drugs, violent behaviors and non-committed sex
14. Includes effects of drug and alcohol use on decision making
15. Includes character, relationship, leadership skills and partner selection strategies
16. Includes the social science in regard to what makes relationships succeed or fail
17. Includes many messages about starting over
18. Includes a parent component
19. Includes instruction, strategies and training to be inclusive to all students

REAL Essentials is: Life, Love and Leadership Training

The Need for Life, Love and Leadership Skills

The non-marital child bearing rate in this country is now 41 percent and rising. The vast majority of those dealing with the oppressive effects of poverty are single parent households. It is harder and harder to raise children now as the media and cultural influences are more and more pervasive. Single parents do a heroic job but need assistance and support. According to the data, of the children born to married couples, half of those marriages will end in divorce leaving many children bewildered and hurt. Of the couples who do stay together, many are models of unhealthy 5

relationships filled with unresolved conflict, tension and emotional isolation. Something is NOT working! Our children are growing up in the midst of fractured families and dysfunctional relationships. This is affecting far more than their performance at school. Today's students are questioning their own abilities to experience a fulfilling lifelong committed marriage. They are even wondering about the value of marriage altogether. They have seen enough drama and dysfunction. What they need is an opportunity to discover, dream about and learn how to have a healthy lifelong lasting committed satisfying relationship. Young people with the fun interactive activities throughout the curriculum,

The REAL Essentials program educates, equips, empowers and encourages students to learn about themselves and others, about the basics of friendship, love, communication, creative problem solving, decision making, negotiation, conflict resolution, relationship development skills, media literacy, navigating peer pressure job skills and future orientation planning for life and love success. Research indicates that family structure matters to child health and health and well-being. Healthy married bio mom or dad or adoptive couples seem to have children who are healthier and have access to health care. See links: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_10/sr10_246.pdf

See US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/benefits/index.html>

The goal of REAL Essentials is certainly to prevent the twin epidemics of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. It is also to reduce non-marital child bearing and poverty, as well as to increase the well-being of children and adults alike. It is about success sequencing, "First comes love; then comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage." It is about deciding rather than sliding into a relationship. It is about being intentional, keeping your options open and learning the strategies for life and love success. It is about putting your oxygen mask on first before helping others. It is about learning the skills necessary to get smart with your heart. It is about reducing the drama so kids can learn. It is about getting adolescents to adulthood with the least amount of emotional baggage and hurt as possible.

REAL Essentials is not about just imparting information. According to Dr. Reed Tuckson, M.D., chief medical officer for United Health Group, who spoke at a plenary session at the American School Health Association Conference, information alone does not change behavior. What does change behavior is being motivated, inspired, captivated, encouraged, mentored and having an emotional connection and skill set for that which one desires to change. He said, "We as health educators must increase the concept of the possibility of a meaningful future by addressing issues of the heart." The best-selling book *Drive* by Daniel Pink outlines what motivates humans. Most believe the rewards and punishment theory is accurate for low level cognitive tasks. When the tasks require more cognitive executive functioning, however, rewards and punishment are not effective motivators.

According to the research, there are three motivating factors:

- 1) Autonomy (empowerment)
- 2) Mastery (skill-building)
- 3) Purpose (why are we doing this, "A Belief in a Meaningful and Promising Future" as stated by Dr. Tuckson)

REAL Essentials uses these constructs to form and instruct this curriculum and is strategically crafted to inspire young people to live a life of character, self-regulation, patience and perseverance that will reap limitless benefits not only in relationship/family formation and maintenance, but in job performance, self-sufficiency and a meaningful and promising future.

The Uniqueness of REAL Essentials

This curriculum leads young people away from high risk behaviors by teaching **toward** something they desire and something they can say yes to. It is overwhelmingly positive with many opportunities to start over no matter what behaviors student has already been involved in. Keeping sex positive is imperative to the author of this curriculum. For too long young people have heard that sex is synonymous with disease or teen pregnancy. The paradigm shift that needs to take place is sex is coupled with committed love.

The Strategy of REAL Essentials

REAL Essentials teaches to the concrete nature of adolescent brain development rather than the abstract thinking of adults. It takes into account the many different learning styles of students and integrates elements of interactivity and fun to make the lessons memorable. Psychologist Erik Erikson identified a series of developmental pathways that a child must progress through on his or her way to maturity. Erikson defines the teenager stage as “The Genital Stage,” where direct sexual energies are reawakened. It is at this stage of development when boys and girls recognize developmental differences and gender identity issues.

The Constructs and Framework of REAL Essentials

There are nine underlying themes that form the foundation of the REAL Essentials curriculum. These are concepts the curriculum strives to explain and instill in each student:

1. The Value of Character / Leadership to Success
2. The Value of Healthy Relationships
3. The Value of Starting Over
4. The Value of Future Orientation
5. The Value of Possessing Skills to Say “No” Without Hurting Others
6. The Value of Appreciating Others (Even if they are different)
7. The Value of Healthy Lifetime Committed Relationships / Marriage
8. The Value of Safe and Stable Family Structure to the Health and Well-Being of Children
9. The Value of Healthy Choices, Impulse Control, Being Intentional, Personal Power and Self-Regulation and Success Sequencing

The Emphasis of REAL Essentials

- Teaching the importance of building satisfying and mature love relationships
- Teaching the skills and strategies to help teens postpone early sexual involvement
- Teaching in a whole child or holistic approach
- Training a community in risk avoidance and primary prevention, and relationship and leadership skills so teens have a clear and consistent message from all those with whom they come in contact
- Collaborating with other agencies to change the social norms of communities around risk behaviors utilizing a community saturation approach

The Methodologies Used in REAL Essentials

For the Community

- Promotes a continuous and active effort to include the community in the teaching process
- Encourages parental involvement by taking an active role in student take home assignments

- Develops the critical foundations and reinforcement necessary to build healthy adult relationships
- Honors local community norms and traditions

For the School

- This secular, non-sectarian program has been adapted for adoption in a middle school and high school classroom with each grade having 10-15 lessons
- The cultural norms and traditions of the community are respected
- When conducted by a speaker's bureau, program materials such as handouts and activity instructions are left with the school in order to expand on the concepts taught
- The instructor maintains a conscious effort to provide gender equity in the presentation
- All scientific literature used and documented in this program is sourced and findings are substantiated
- Teachers utilizing this program are thoroughly trained and philosophically equipped to teach the concepts
- Respect is communicated for ALL students during the program
- Lessons are aligned with state and local curriculum standards and guidelines to enhance skills and outcomes expected

For the Teacher

- Terminology and concepts are clearly stated and focused
- Concepts are sequential, relational and integrated throughout the program
- Segments of the program engage and challenge students
- The slide presentation can be used as the instructor presents the material to capture and focus student attention
- Common visual objects are used to present abstract concepts in a concrete way
- The slide presentation features easy to read, colorful and entertaining, age-appropriate graphics
- Teaching style is conversational with the students to avoid lecturing
- The program is frequently updated to ensure medical accuracy
- As a directive model of teen pregnancy/disease prevention, and life, love and leadership curriculum, the program guides the student toward a specific health behavior
- Conveys an uplifting and positive message while emphasizing a "can do" spirit.
- Provides students the opportunity to reach the highest attainable level of expectations and standards
- Fear and shame are not utilized as a way to change behavior
- Trauma informed teaching strategies are utilized

For the Student

- Inclusiveness and respect is communicated and affirmed for all students during this program
- Students are involved in teaching the concepts
- Discussion questions and student responses are built into the program
- A diverse group of teenagers participated in the content selection, development and evaluation of the program in order to maintain relevancy 8

The General Goals of REAL Essentials

Impart Knowledge and Information

- To help teens with their self-discovery process
- To describe the emotional impact of premature romantic attachments
- To identify all components of sexuality
- To help teens understand how their bodies work
- To help teens conceptualize love and commitment
- To identify the components and value of healthy lifetime committed relationships / marriage to individuals and society
- To identify individual love languages and the ways teens feel loved
- To identify physical, emotional, spiritual, academic and economic consequences of early sexual involvement
- To reframe the act of sexual intercourse in a lifetime committed relationship
- To teach teens the positive benefits of utilizing self-control and behavioral restraint
- To raise expectations for responsible behavior
- To help teens understand how to be “sexual” without being “sexually active”
- To impart the latest research regarding what makes relationships work

Provide Skills

- To teach creative dating skills and alternatives to sexual behavior
- To help teens say “no” without hurting the other person’s feelings
- To teach teens to enjoy the freedom that accompanies boundary setting
- To teach teens the steps of intimacy and the progressive nature of physical affection
- To teach teens how to use the building blocks of healthy relationships
- To help teens develop support systems to maintain the healthiest choice
- To help teens identify and overcome barriers to conflict resolution
- To enhance communication and improve teen relationships
- To expose media and cultural influences so that teens learn to recognize unhealthy messages and use critical thinking skills
- To teach teens how to set limits and boundaries, and use refusal skills
- To practice the planning and commitment necessary to maintain risk-avoidance behaviors and safe and stable family formation for their future
- To teach teens to avoid exploitive, abusive, controlling, violent or manipulative relationships
- To reduce cognitive dissonance which is when students articulate one thing and do another
- To teach teens to ask for help and support when they need it
- To teach teens to recognize the elements of healthy relationship development and maintenance
- To teach leadership, job skills and life management

Provide Affirmation

- To help teens recognize that many people care for them
- To help teens value who they are
- To help teens discover their personality traits and affirm their uniqueness
- To help teens accept and respect others who are different from themselves

- To affirm positive behaviors in the students and to teach them to affirm positive behaviors in others
- To teach teens to express feelings and ask for help when needed
- To teach teens to value risk-avoidance behaviors, committed love, marriage, and safe and stable family formation

Influence Behavior

- To reduce adolescent sexual activity and the subsequent consequences of adolescent pregnancy, non-marital childbearing and sexually transmitted diseases
- To reduce the emotional pain often associated with early, uncommitted sexual involvement
- To enable sexually active teenagers to stop current sexual behavior, start over and set new boundaries around sexual intimacy
- To reduce teen dating violence and intimate partner violence
- To reduce substance use and abuse
- To reduce academic underachievement and dropout rates
- To reduce teen dating violence and bullying

ASSUMPTIONS OF REAL ESSENTIALS

- Teacher agrees with the philosophy of the directive character-based model of life, love and leadership education
- When sex within marriage is referenced in this curriculum, and referred to as the healthiest place for sexual expression
- That according to research, the optimal family structure in which to raise future children is in a bio mom and dad married family, it is within the assumption that the marriage relationship is healthy and that both partners are mentally and emotionally stable.
- The teacher implementing this curriculum maintains the assumption that when given guidance, support and skills, students can make the realistic, positive and healthy choice to not engage in high-risk health behaviors.
- The REAL Essentials workshop and curriculum is a life, love and leadership program utilizing primary prevention strategies. Its use, however, is complementary to any public classroom because the core concepts of respect, self-control, honesty, integrity and building relationships are necessary in all human experiences. In addition, the value of every individual is reinforced throughout this project.
- The relationship and prevention strategies addressed in the curriculum benefit all members of a middle or high school community such as monogamy, the reduction of multiple partners and risk-avoidance behaviors present health benefits for every member of a school community.
- The teacher agrees to maintain fidelity to content but is encouraged to use the curriculum with creativity and versatility. Directive character based programs promote sexual risk avoidance as the healthiest and preferred lifestyle for adolescents. However, encouraging students to remain abstinent until they find that one person with whom they plan to spend the rest of their lives is shortsighted unless they have the skills and strength of character necessary to choose, adopt and follow through on their decisions.
- Young people are practicing now what they will become in the future. The skills they learn in the curriculum will enable them to self-regulate even when they are tempted as adults.

Principles Guiding This Curriculum

- Health is not defined by the absence of disease.
- Every individual has value and worth and deserves respect and kindness.
- All children should be relentlessly nurtured.
- There are multiple dimensions of sexuality: physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual.
- The skills of healthy relationship development are inclusive to all students.
- Individuals express their sexuality in different ways.
- Both genders deserve not to be stereotyped and put into behavioral roles.
- Parents should be the primary sexuality educators of their children.
- Families should communicate their values and expectations for behavior to their children.
- There is a diversity of opinion about sexuality education in our culture. Adults should work together to find common ground so that students get a clear and consistent optimal health message.
- Sexual relationships should be based on respect, commitment and fidelity and never be exploitative, coercive or manipulative.
- Early sexual debut poses risks.
- Risk avoidance education is a healthy lifestyle choice, not a birth control method.
- Children should feel safe to openly discuss sexuality with their parents or caretakers.
- Risk avoidance and not engaging in sexual intercourse is the most effective method to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Marriage, healthy family formation, and safe and stable families are important to the well-being of children and adults alike.
- Father absence, family fragmentation and divorce are risk factors for children as it relates to involvement in high-risk behaviors.
- Students who are sexually active need to get tested at a health care facility, talk with a medical professional, be instructed how to use risk reducers consistently and correctly every single time and counseled compassionately about returning to a risk avoidance behavioral choice.
- Training is necessary to be able to do something in the future that one cannot do currently.
- When adults set high standards and expectations for children, then guide and coach them, children feel valued and capable.

REAL Essentials and Brain Engagement Strategies

REAL Essentials is consistent with instructional strategies that engage the brain:

1. Brainstorming and discussion
2. Drawing and artwork
3. Field trips
4. Games
5. Graphic organizers, semantic maps and word webs
6. Humor
7. Manipulatives, experiments, labs and models
8. Metaphors, analogies and similes
9. Mnemonic devices
10. Movement
11. Music, rhythm, rhyme and rap

12. Project-based and problem-based instruction
13. Reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning
14. Role plays, drama, pantomimes and charades
15. Storytelling
16. Technology
17. Visualization and guided imagery
18. Visuals
19. Work study and apprenticeships
20. Writing and journals

Source: *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites: 20 Instructional Strategies That Engage the Brain* by Marcia Tate.

REAL Essentials and the Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula

REAL Essentials adheres to all of the following aspects of an effective health education curricula:

1. Focuses on specific-behavioral outcomes
2. Is research-based and theory-driven.
3. Addresses individual values and group norms that support health-enhancing behaviors.
4. Focuses on increasing the personal perception of risk and harmfulness of engaging in specific health risk behaviors as well as reinforcing protective factors.
5. Addresses social pressures and influences.
6. Builds personal competence, social competence, and self-efficacy by teaching skills.
7. Provides functional health knowledge that is basic and accurate, and directly contributes to health-promoting decisions and behaviors.
8. Uses strategies designed to personalize information and engage students.
9. Provides age and developmentally appropriate learning strategies, teaching methods and materials.
10. Incorporates learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials that are culturally inclusive.
11. Provides adequate time for instruction and learning.
12. Provides opportunities to reinforce skills and positive health behaviors.
13. Provides opportunities to make positive connections with others and to seek out support.
14. Includes teacher information and plans for professional development and training that enhances effectiveness of instruction and student learning.

REAL Essentials and Characteristics of Effective Programs

REAL Essentials aligns with 17 characteristics of effective programs:

1. Involves multiple people with different backgrounds in theory, research and sexuality education to develop the curriculum.
2. Assesses relevant needs and assets of target group.
3. Uses a logic model approach to develop the curriculum that specifies the health goals, the behaviors affecting those health goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviors and the activities addressing those risk and protective factors.
4. Designs activities consistent with community values and available resources (e.g., staff time, staff skills, facility space and supplies).
5. Pilot-tests the program.
6. Focuses on clear health goals—the prevention of STD, HIV and/or pregnancy.

7. Focuses narrowly on specific behaviors leading to these health goals (e.g., sexual risk avoidance or using condoms or other contraceptives), gives clear messages about these behaviors and addresses situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them.
8. Addresses multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors (e.g. knowledge, perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms and self-efficacy).
9. Creates a safe social environment for youth to participate.
10. Includes multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.
11. Employs instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involve the participants, that help participants personalize the information, and that are designed to change each group of risk and protective factors.
12. Employs activities, instructional methods and behavioral messages that are appropriate to the youths' culture, developmental age and sexual experience.
13. Covers topics in a logical sequence.
15. Secures at least minimal support from appropriate authorities, such as departments of health, school districts or community organizations.
16. Selects educators with desired characteristics (whenever possible), trains them and provides monitoring, supervision and support. If needed, implements activities to recruit and retain youth and overcome barriers to their involvement (e.g., publicized the program, offered food or obtained consent).
17. Implements virtually all activities with reasonable fidelity.

Source: "Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex Education and STD/HIV Programs" by Dr. Douglas Kirby

Characteristics of REAL Essentials

- Well-trained teachers
- Community involvement
- Inclusivity and relevance to all students
- Utilize a variety of teaching methods
- High intensity and duration of clear, consistent messages
- Multiple strategies to reinforce the message of optimal health
- Parent involvement and support
- Monitoring and evaluation

Community vs. School Curriculum

- Community curriculum is used in the community setting such as Boys and Girls Club or YMCA where there are multiple ages present in the program delivery.
- School curriculum is outlined and delivered in age-specific classrooms.

Age Appropriateness

REAL Essentials was developed utilizing age-appropriate guidelines.

What Is a Community Saturation Approach?

A community saturation approach is defined by the service or product being utilized or delivered in multiple settings in the community. This is necessary because the schools have so many demands on their time and they are being asked to do more with less money, less resources and less time. In order to change the culture of the community and to have wrap around prevention services and messages to our children, we must have an all hands on deck mentality.

What Is the SMARTool?

Through a cooperative agreement with the Division of Adolescent School Health (DASH) in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Center for Relationship Center developed the Systematic Method for Assessing Risk-avoidance Tool (SMARTool). The SMARTool helps assess risk-avoidance sexuality education curriculum for alignment with the following targets which have been found to help students delay sexual debut.

Target Areas:

- #1 Enhance knowledge of: a) physical development and sexual risks, and b) personal relationships
- #2 Support personal attitudes and beliefs that value sexual risk avoidance
- #3 Improve perception of and independence from negative peer and social norms
- #4 Build personal competencies and self-efficacy to refuse sex
- #5 Strengthen personal intention and commitment to avoid sexual involvement
- #6 Identify and reduce the opportunities for sexual involvement
- #7 Acknowledge and address common rationalizations for sexual involvement
- #8 Strengthen future goals and opportunities
- #9 Partner with parents

REAL Essentials includes the aforementioned target areas outlined in the adolescent scientific literature to increase protective factors and to reduce risk factors for sexual risk avoidance. For assistance in evaluating your curricula with respect to these targets, call the Center for Relationship Education at (720) 488-8888 to learn more about the SMARTool.

The Center for Relationship Education's Mission

The Center for Relationship Education is dedicated to teaching individuals of all ages the skills necessary to develop healthy relationships, build strong marriages, form and maintain safe and stable families to reduce poverty and increase child well-being.

For more information visit www.myrelationshipcenter.org or call (720) 488-8888.