

Choosing the Best LIFE

Eighth Grade

Wythe County Public Schools

Virginia's Abstinence Education Program (AEP)

Choosing the Best Aims to increase the number of youth aged 10 to 19 who abstain from sexual activity and other related risky behaviors. Consistent with Title V Federal guidelines A-H for abstinence education, Choosing the Best curricula serve school systems and community groups. A recently published study indicated that students who received Choosing the Best were nearly 1.5 times more likely to delay the onset of sexual behavior than students who did not receive the program. Teachers and parents alike praise our age-appropriate materials!

Choosing the Best LIFE Grade 8

Eight lessons emphasize the straight facts about health risks and give students the emotional strength and self-discipline to commit to abstinence until marriage.

Choosing the Best LIFE

For Upper Middle School – 8th Grade

Direct enough to command teens' attention, this 8-session curriculum also helps communicate, dynamically and positively, the value of choosing sexual delay. Videos that open each lesson lead naturally to a vibrant discussion. The 45-minute segments include topics such as sexual violence prevention, understanding consent, healthy relationships, and role-plays that help teens avoid at-risk behaviors. Topics include:

- **Developing Healthy Relationships**

Students learn how to identify healthy versus unhealthy relationships and 5 tips for developing healthy relationships.

- **Preventing Sexual Violence**

Students learn that sexual violence can include everything from unwanted sexual fondling to internet sexual harassment to rape or attempted rape and that it is NEVER the victim's fault. The lesson covers how to get help if you or someone you know has been a victim and teaches the 5 key components of consent.

- **Preventing STDs**

This lesson provides detailed, medically accurate information about common STDs, including symptoms, potential complications, and treatments. Students learn how STDs are spread, along with the benefits and limitations of "safe" or "safer sex," and why sexual delay is the best STD prevention strategy. One-fourth of new STDs occur in boys and girls aged 15-19.

- **Preventing Teen Pregnancy**

A real-life teen couple shares the struggle of an unintended pregnancy. After teens evaluate choices and consequences, they can clearly see the value of delaying sex for their health and future.

- **Avoiding HIV/AIDS**

Teens are educated about the myths versus facts about HIV/AIDS and, as they listen to a young woman share how it feels to live with HIV/AIDS, learn compassion.

- **Choosing the Best LIFE**

Teens hear others share why they've chosen sexual delay and then participate in a discussion about the differences between love and infatuation. Teens are encouraged to think about their personal goals and how choosing to delay sex could benefit their future.

- **Setting Limits**

Beginning with setting personal boundaries, teens learn practical ways to handle sexual pressure from peers and others. Included is a discussion about the dangers of sexting.

- **Resisting Pressure**

Practical role-plays enable students to develop and sharpen assertiveness skills, verbally and non-verbally, to resist unwanted sexual pressure.

Why Choosing the Best Works:

Choosing the Best utilizes the following five keys to effective abstinence and relationship education:

- **Motivational Learning Environment**

Video vignettes of real-life teens, in-depth discussions, classroom exercises, and role-plays engage the students in learning.

- **Medical Learning Model**

Current information on STDs, emotional consequences, and teen pregnancy.

- **Relationship Education and Refusal Skills**

Provides students with the confidence to handle negative peer and relationship pressures.

- **Parent Involvement**

The student manual provides at-home opportunities for parent-student interaction.

- **Character Education**

Students are challenged to develop respect, self-respect, compassion, honesty, and courage.

All classes are taught in gender-separated environments. Questions are allowed, and students are permitted to write questions anonymously on an index card at the end of each class.

Audio-visual materials are available to view by parents upon request. Descriptions of the videos are provided in the Resource Section of this material.

The Presentation follows The Virginia Family Life Education Board of Education Guidelines and Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools. The standards for the seventh grade are as follows.

Choosing the Best LIFE

STANDARDS OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS

EIGHTH GRADE

- 8.1 The student will relate stages of human development to his or her own developmental level.**

Descriptive Statement: The student learns that people change as they age, according to their developmental level--physically, mentally, and emotionally. Physical development and human anatomy are reviewed. Stages of mental and emotional development are presented in relation to the student's present developmental level with the goal of increasing his or her self-understanding and self-acceptance--now and in the future. Commonly accepted theories of personal development are presented as they relate to the student's own development.

- 8.2 The student will recognize the development of sexuality as an aspect of the total personality.**

Descriptive Statement: The primary factor to be presented is the development of one's own sexual identity.

- 8.3 The student will become aware of the need to think through decisions and to take responsibility for them.**

Descriptive Statement: The impact of present decisions on future opportunities and personal development is stressed. Instruction also includes support skills for the decision-making process--assertive communication, identification of personal conflicts, positive mental health practices, and conflict resolution. Lifelong educational, career, and personal development goals are examined concerning present decisions and options available to males and females at various stages of their lives. Students will discuss the impact of personal information and pictures/images posted on social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, or Twitter on future goals. Criminal penalties for engaging in sexually explicit communications will be discussed.

- 8.4 The student will identify the issues associated with friendships.**

Descriptive Statement: The student accomplishes this by reviewing the characteristics of appropriate and inappropriate friendships, by discussing the qualities of a good friend, and by relating the characteristics to changes as one continues to advance through the growth and development process.

- 8.5 The student will recognize the nature of dating during adolescence.**

Descriptive Statement: Content includes the need for belonging, love, and affection and the search for one's own identity. In addition, students examine the difference between love and infatuation and become aware that one learns about oneself from every relationship, and these experiences prepare one for the challenges and responsibilities of marriage. The student will also recognize warning signs and characteristics of potentially abusive dating relationships and negative mental health practices.

8.6 The student will interpret the messages in society related to sexuality.

Descriptive Statement: Students continue to discover, identify and analyze messages about sexuality found in advertising media, music and videos, television, films, the internet, printed materials, and graffiti. Students also determine the impact of these messages on themselves and others and review how to counteract negative effects, and report to parents/guardians and authorities. Positive alternatives to media immersion are discussed. Students will demonstrate how these messages affect mental health issues related to sexuality.

8.7 The student will describe strategies for saying "no" to premarital sexual relations.

Descriptive Statements: The emphasis is on strengthening self-confidence and reinforcing assertive skills and decision-making skills. Students learn why and how to say "no" to premarital sexual relations and to situations that challenge their own values, how to manage peer pressure, and how to manage their own sexual feelings.

8.8 The student will develop the coping skills needed to deal with stress.

Descriptive Statement: Students identify possible sources of stress (for example, parental, peer, and school pressures; teenage pregnancy; and fear of HIV); and the positive and negative ways in which individuals deal with these sources of stress. The point is made; however, that stress cannot be avoided and that it is not all negative. Information is provided to counteract negative approaches to dealing with stress, such as alcohol, drugs, and suicide. Students learn positive physical and mental techniques for coping with stress (for example, exercise and sports, creative arts, religious activities, and youth groups, and career development and life-management activities).

8.9 The student will identify the stresses related to changing relationships in the home, school, and community.

Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is placed on the grief and adjustment processes associated with loss or change resulting from such circumstances as illness, a disabling condition, death, separation, divorce, loss of friendship, loss of income, or coping with substance abuse. The point is made, however, that changes may bring new opportunities to form friendships and to engage in new activities; that some relationships contain normal amounts of stress, especially in adolescents; and that stress is usually only temporary. The student will utilize positive mental health practices in stress management.

8.10 The student will analyze the issues related to teenage pregnancy.

Descriptive Statement: The physical, social, emotional, legal, financial, educational, psychological, and nutritional implications of teenage pregnancy are discussed. The roles of and impact on the teenage mother and father are identified.

8.11 The student will review facts about pregnancy prevention and disease control.

Descriptive Statement: Methods of contraception are analyzed in terms of their effectiveness in preventing pregnancy and the spread of disease. Abstinence is emphasized as the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

8.12 The student will describe the effects of alcohol and drug use and abuse on families and peer relationships.

Descriptive Statement: The effects of substance use and abuse on judgment within the peer group in terms of social and sexual behavior are analyzed. The effects of such use and abuse within the family also are emphasized, including family and sexual violence.

8.13 The student will identify the effects and prevention of sexual assault, rape (including date rape), incestuous behavior, and molestation.

Descriptive Statement: Content includes developing assertive skills, resolving conflict, avoiding risky situations, and saying "no." Characteristics of dating violence, electronic harassment, and abusive relationships will be discussed. Information on referral services and legal implications are also provided.

8.14 The student will recall the ways in which the HIV virus is transmitted and prevented.

Descriptive Statement: This involves describing behaviors that put one at risk, dispelling myths regarding the transmission of the infection, and stressing abstinence from risky behavior. The use of condoms in preventing the spread of HIV is discussed.