

Choosing the Best PATH

Sixth 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 WAY

For Lower Middle School – 6th Grade

Down-to-earth and hands-on, these 6 sessions keep students involved through self-discovery and interviews with friends, parents or guardians, and class partners. Videos that open each lesson lead naturally to the discussion. This lively curriculum creates the foundation for an informed commitment to healthy relationships. The 45-minute sessions

- **Deciding on Your Future**

Students watch teens talk about the importance of making smart decisions. Students then discover how decisions help them reach their goals, especially when linked with determination.

- **Figuring Out Friendships and Relationships**

This lesson begins by looking at the qualities of a good friend, then progresses to understanding crushes, infatuations, and true love through a fun-filled activity. Learning respect for the other person is part of this lively session.

- **Avoiding Unhealthy Relationships**

Students learn about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, discovering how emotional needs may leave them vulnerable to unhealthy relationships. An engaging activity helps students build self-esteem by discovering their personal uniqueness. Included is a separate discussion about preventing sexual violence, which teaches students how to identify sexual violence as well as how to get help if they or someone they know has been a victim.

- **Identifying the Risks**

This lesson presents students with facts about the risks of teen pregnancy and STDs, as well as the emotional effects often not discussed. From this study, students see the need for compassion.

- **Choosing the Best Way**

This lesson's study reinforces the risks of sexual activity while also emphasizing the positive benefits of sexual delay. Students discuss healthy choices and have the chance to reflect upon how choosing to delay sexual activity can benefit their health and future.

- **Learning How to Say "NO."**

Once students choose sexual delay, they need tools to help them resist pressures from friends and others to become sexually active. Students learn how to set boundaries, speak up, and be assertive through teaching and role-plays. Students also learn the importance of courage in sticking with their decisions.

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.

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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 WAY

STANDARDS OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS

SIXTH GRADE

- 6.1 The student will understand personal hygiene practices and the physical changes that occur during puberty.**

Descriptive Statement: Changes during puberty are discussed in relation to the increased need for personal hygiene, proper dental care, frequent showering, and shampooing, for the use of deodorants, for the use and disposal of pads and tampons, and for clean clothing.

- 6.2 The student will explain the effects of growth on development, attitudes, and interests.**

Descriptive Statement: The teacher provides opportunities for discussion of physical changes during puberty, group and non-group relationships, peer pressure, and boy/girl relationships. Emphasis is on the positive and normal aspects of differences among individuals.

- 6.3 The student will continue to identify physical and emotional changes that occur during puberty and their effects on growth and development.**

Descriptive Statement: The following topics are discussed in relation to male and female changes during puberty: nocturnal emissions and erections; menstruation, masturbation; instability of emotions and ways of expressing these emotions appropriately; and approaches to developing a positive attitude toward one's sexuality.

- 6.4 The student will recall basic facts about sexually transmitted infections.**

Descriptive Statement: Factual information is presented regarding sexually transmitted infections, including Chlamydia, Genital Herpes, Gonorrhea, HPV, and Syphilis. Diseases of the genitalia common to adolescents that are not sexually transmitted are described so as to allay unnecessary fears (such as vaginitis, urethritis, etc.).

- 6.5 The student will be able to describe the etiology, effects, and transmission of HIV.**

Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes factual information regarding HIV and its transmission. The medical profession should be involved in teaching this objective (and other health-related topics) to include the most up-to-date facts.

- 6.6 The student will summarize the process of human reproduction and the benefits of postponing premarital sexual activity.**

Descriptive Statement: This is a review of the reproductive process and the advantages of delaying sexual involvement. The possible detrimental effects of premarital sexual activity for both males and females are emphasized. They include sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy, infant mortality, and psychological (reputation, self-esteem, etc.), social, economic, mental, and physical consequences.

6.7 The student will describe personal characteristics that can contribute to happiness for self and others.

Descriptive Statement: This includes self-discipline, self-esteem, and independence, acceptance of reality, acceptance of others, tolerance, concern for the needs of disabled persons, loyalty, honesty, cooperation, diligence, respect for proper authority, and acceptance of responsibility for self in relation to others. The student will practice appropriate and positive personal and social responses.

6.8 The student will demonstrate an increased understanding of child abuse and neglect, including emotional and sexual abuse.

Descriptive Statement: This is accomplished by defining the types of abuse, including electronic harassment, and explaining the need to report such situations to a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, minister, grandparent, or guardian. The teacher helps students identify resources for the reporting and treatment of child abuse, sexual and family violence.

6.9 The student will become aware of community healthcare and safety agencies and their functions.

Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes information about the availability of community agencies providing the following services: child abuse prevention; treatment of abuse victims; mental health counseling; teenage pregnancy prevention and counseling; family planning counseling; prenatal care; substance abuse prevention and treatment and support groups; suicide prevention; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; other general and specialized medical services, including the role of the family physician, local health department or community service board; police department, fire department, and other safety services; and community services provided by religious organizations. Parents are encouraged to learn about these agencies and to use their services when needed.

6.10 The student will explain the effects of substance use and abuse on the individual, family, school, and society.

Descriptive Statement: The effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs on the individual, family, school, and society are presented with emphasis on adolescent brain development, genetic risks and fetal development, addiction, impaired driving, physical and sexual abuse, mental health issues, family violence, and the hazards of second-hand tobacco use and smoking. Information on local community resources for obtaining help with these problems is included.

6.11 The student will evaluate the messages from mass media related to sexuality and gender stereotyping.

Descriptive Statement: Students progress from examining media messages in the fifth grade to evaluating messages from mass media related to sexuality and gender stereotyping in the sixth grade. The avoidance of sexual exploitation, sexual violence, sexual abuse (including electronic harassment), and stereotyping is stressed. Students will understand how the media affects mental health issues related to sexuality.

6.12 Students will explain laws protecting children from the inappropriate and abusive behavior of others, including human trafficking.

Descriptive Statement: Differentiating between labor and human trafficking will be discussed, including the recognition that human trafficking is a crime, that victims may be male or female, how laws provide protection, and resources for victims.

6.13 The student will apply decision-making skills in problem-solving and in determining the possible outcomes of his or her decisions.

Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes the steps in the decision-making process, problem-solving, and assertive communication skills. Using positive mental health practices, students relate decision-making and problem-solving skills to actual adolescent problems--their own or situations presented in case problems. The effects of decisions on lifelong goals are emphasized, and students predict the possible outcomes of decisions made. Students will discuss the permanency of misuse of social media and text messaging, including criminal penalties for engaging in sexually explicit communications. Career and other options available are stressed as choices and are identified in the decision-making process.