

Across America, there is a battle underway to determine the kind of sex education our children should receive from local school districts. The vast majority of parents agree that schools should provide sex education for students. The question becomes: “What kind?” There are fundamentally two very different philosophies and approaches being proposed.

The first is Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) education, which provides the information and skills so youth can achieve optimal sexual health. SRA strongly promotes waiting until marriage as the healthiest choice—physically and emotionally—for youth. These programs often discuss contraception, but always within the context of teaching risk avoidance as the best and healthiest choice.

The second is Sexual Risk Reduction (SRR) “comprehensive” sex education, which assumes that teens will have sex and so focuses on reducing the physical risks associated with sex. SRR “comprehensive” sex education advocates and demonstrates contraceptive use while only briefly discussing risk avoidance. This kind of sex education is based on the premise that premarital sex among youth is trouble free as long as contraception is used, an approach that essentially normalizes sex for teens.

Yet despite overwhelming parental support for abstinence sex education, there is an organized effort underway in every state, led by groups such as Planned Parenthood, SIECUS, the ACLU, and NARAL Pro-Choice America, to prevent SRA education from being taught in schools. These groups and others are attempting to force schools to instead adopt SRR “comprehensive” sex education.

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