

ELPS HIV/Sex Education Curriculum Pilot Report

Background:

In accordance with district policy 5407 (ELPS Curriculum Adoption Process), the by-laws of the East Lansing Public School's Sex Education Advisory Board (SEAB), and the state of Michigan's HIV and Sex Education regulations, the East Lansing Public School's Sex Education Advisor Board engaged in a process to review and adopt an updated HIV and sexual health curriculum for 7th through 12th grades. After convening a review committee comprised of district staff and SEAB members, curriculum options were reviewed over the 2024-2025 school year, with the ultimate recommendation that the Advocates for Youth's "[Rights, Respect, and Responsibility \(Michigan Aligned -2023\)](#)" curriculum best met the SEAB's criteria for inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, digital availability and up-to-date alignment with Michigan state requirements and national HIV prevention and sexual health standards. Therefore, a curriculum piloting plan was developed to gather feedback from students and teachers as the next stage of the review process.

Pilot Plan

The goal of the pilot was to gather feedback from educators and students regarding the relevance, relatability, and classroom experience associated with the lessons and materials. Following the pilot phase, feedback from educators and students was gathered through surveys. The selected pilot lessons included three lessons for grades 7-8 and three for grades 9-12. Each of these lessons covers themes related to STI/HIV and pregnancy prevention, sexual violence prevention, and responsible decision-making.

7th Grade & 8th Grade Lesson 4 - Protecting Your Health: Understanding and Preventing HIV and STIs ;
7th Grade & 8th Grade Lesson 6 - Making SMART Choices ,
7th Grade & 8th Grade Lesson 8 - Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault
9-12th Grade: Lesson 2 - Unhealthy Relationships: Plan for Safety
9-12th Grade: Lesson 5 - Planning and Protection: Avoiding and Managing STIs ;
9-12th Grade: Lesson 11: Rights, Respect, Responsibility - Don't Have Sex Without Them ;

The pilot was scheduled to occur from late April through the first week of June of the 2024-25 school year, aligning with the usual timing of HIV/sex education instruction in 7th and 8th-grade science and High School health classrooms. Teachers were provided with the pilot lesson materials and orientation from the district Sex Education Supervisor in advance of the implementation period. During this orientation phase, the Sex Education Supervisor determined that the Middle School [Lesson 8 - Warning Signs: Understanding Sexual Abuse and Assault](#) needed to be excluded from the pilot, as teachers expressed concerns about preparedness to manage and respond to any potential surfacing of trauma or adverse emotional response from students.

The pilot materials were included in the parent notification process before the start of HIV/sex education instruction. They were also available for parent review, just as our other approved sex education materials. Parents were able to voluntarily opt their child out of the pilot lessons before instruction, and those students were excluded from the pilot.

Results:

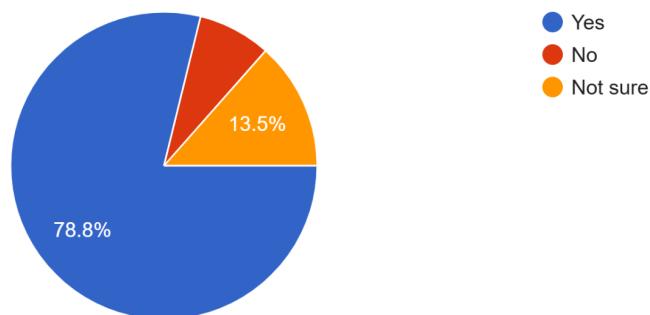
High School (Grades 9 - 12)

Through one of the two high school health classrooms, 52 ninth- and twelfth-grade students participated in the pilot and completed the student survey.

The majority of high school respondents stated that they did learn something helpful or meaningful to them.

Did you learn something helpful or meaningful to you?

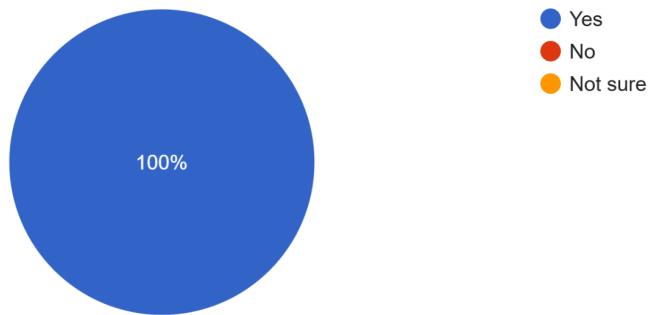
52 responses



All of the high school survey respondents found the lessons easy to understand.

Were the lessons easy to understand?

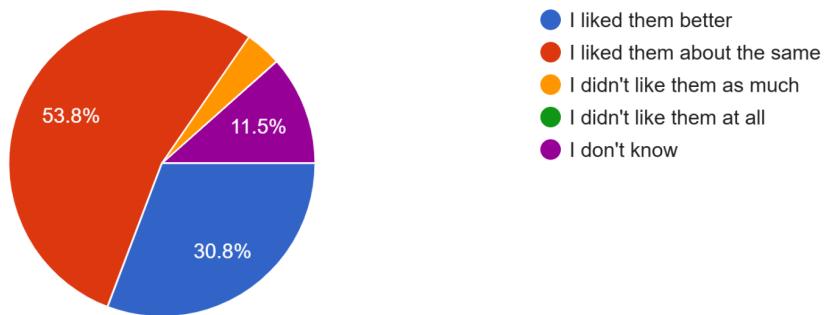
52 responses



Over 84% of high school respondents stated that they preferred the Rights, Respect, and Responsibility curriculum over or equal to the current curriculum. Only 3.8% of student respondents (2) stated they did not like the pilot lessons as much as the current curriculum, and about 11.5% (6 students) said they were unsure or didn't know.

Did you like these lessons more or less than the other sex education/HIV prevention lessons you have participated in this year?

52 responses



The high school survey respondents shared several things they liked about the lessons they participated in. Many found the subjects, such as consent and safe sex, engaging and relevant. Others commented on the lesson presentation, finding the material easy to understand, particularly due to the lesson format and the use of educational videos. Some expressed appreciation of practical learning about protection methods and the implications of STIs, emphasizing the relevance of this knowledge in their lives. Comments also highlighted the use of “real-life scenarios,” which helped prompt relatable discussions about healthy versus unhealthy relationships and helped clarify complex concepts. Overarching, the comments

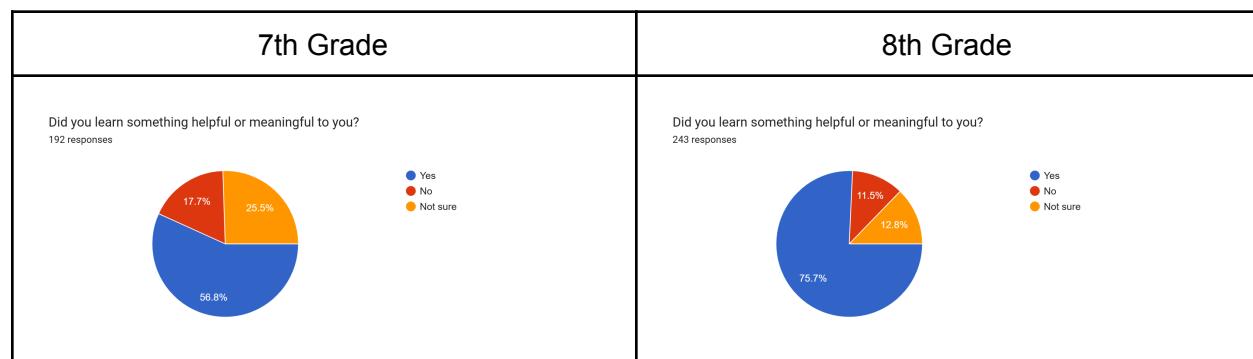
expressed a consensus that the information presented was not only crucial but also empowering, promoting awareness and careful decision-making. Overall, commenters found the lessons to be effective in educating about significant topics straightforwardly and engagingly. One respondent stated, *“I liked that the lesson about consent went super in-depth, because I had never thought to think so much about it.”* Another noted that the lessons “can be applied to our lives right now”.

When asked about what they disliked about the lessons, there were no major grievances; several participants expressed a desire for more depth and better presentation in the lessons. Some of the comments expressed a sense that the students already knew or were familiar with the information. (One responder stated that they’ve “*heard it a million times*”). Yet, other students commented that those who do not identify as straight might need more detail about STI prevention and treatment than what was offered. Another expressed interest to learn more about preventing sexual assault or unhealthy relationships. Some students felt the lessons moved too quickly or were too short. Some found certain readings confusing, and a few mentioned that some content was presented in a way that felt unrealistic or uncomfortable. Some did not specify elements of the curriculum they disliked, but rather expressed a general dislike or discomfort with the topic (sexual health).

The high school student feedback reflects a generally positive response to the lessons, highlighting that they were helpful, informative, and educational. Many participants appreciated the unique perspectives, clear explanations, and the emphasis on important topics like consent and respect. There were a few neutral or mildly negative comments, but overall, the majority indicated that they learned a lot and found the content relevant and useful for their age group.

Middle School (Grades 7 & 8)

At the middle school, 198 seventh graders and 247 eighth graders who participated in the pilot lessons responded to the survey.



56.8% of the middle school survey respondents found that they learned something helpful or meaningful.

Middle school survey respondents reported enjoying the realistic scenarios and group discussions that encouraged them to share their perspectives. Some noted the lessons were easy to understand and engaged them, while others felt uncomfortable discussing certain topics or had prior knowledge of the content. There was a general consensus that the lessons were beneficial for learning about safety, decision-making, and preparing for real-life situations. Some stated that they liked the humorous and relatable scenarios, which contributed to their positive learning experience. Overall, while experiences varied, many students valued the opportunity to learn and discuss the topics interactively.

What students said they liked least were some of the videos and the repetitiveness of the material. Many students found the videos boring, awkward, or cringeworthy, with critiques that they lacked realism. There was a common sentiment that much of the content felt repetitive or familiar since they had learned similar topics in previous lessons. Several students reported discomfort discussing sensitive topics or found the discussions irrelevant to their lives. Several respondents expressed that the lesson felt lengthy and unengaging, with a few stating that they would have preferred more variety in the subject matter or different teaching methods. Many of the middle school comments acknowledged that the information was helpful, even if it wasn't delivered in a compelling manner.

The feedback on the Rights Respect and Responsibility lessons for middle school shows a mix of opinions. Some students found it informative and appreciated the direct approach, considering it helpful. Others felt it was repetitive of information they had already learned about in prior grades. Many comments described the lessons as average or okay, with some expressing discomfort about the topic but recognizing its importance. Overall, while some students enjoyed the content and found it educational, others found it boring or targeted towards a younger audience.

Teacher Feedback:

The high school educator who piloted the lessons for their class was very enthusiastic about the lesson format, student response, and quality of the lesson plans compared to the currently approved curriculum. Their survey response described their students as "highly engaged" with the lessons, and they highly recommended that the district consider adopting the Rights, Respect, and Responsibility curriculum.

For seventh and eighth-grade science educators, who currently deliver HIV education through the Michigan Model health curriculum, the orientation process surfaced more complicated concerns. Primarily, the seventh and eighth-grade science teachers are not health-certified, and therefore not licensed to provide comprehensive sexual health education, such as *Rights Respect and Responsibility*, in the State of Michigan. The current curriculum, *Michigan Model - Growing Up and Staying Healthy: Understanding HIV and Other STIs*, aligns with state law and is designed to accommodate non-health-certified teachers. After confirming with the District Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Director that the remaining two pilot lessons (one focused on HIV/STI prevention and the second on making "SMART" choices) fell within the teachers' licensed scope, the educators were able to proceed with the pilot after the third lesson (focused on preventing sexual abuse/violence) was removed. Middle school teachers who responded to the teacher survey generally found their students were adequately engaged with

the lessons, but did not report liking the pilot lesson materials any more than their current materials.

Summary & recommendations:

The goal of the pilot was to gather feedback from educators and students regarding the relevance, relatability, and classroom experience associated with the lessons and materials. At the High School level, teachers and students responded positively to the material, finding it mostly relevant and relatable. Both students and teachers seemed to enjoy the lessons and materials. The critiques were not strongly adverse to the materials, but rather directed to a desire for more information or were connected to a general dislike of the topic, regardless of the curriculum.

At the Middle School level, the pilot results were less strong in terms of relevance, relatability, and experience. Students' comments were not consistently positive, and students found the content to be redundant and even less informative than the information received at the sixth-grade level. Moreover, a significant instructional barrier was the discovery that none of ELPS's seventh and ninth-grade science teachers (who deliver current HIV/sex education instruction) are health-certified, and therefore not able to implement sex education content beyond HIV education under their current license. This likely also contributed to the educator's discomfort and sense of unpreparedness to deliver content related to sexual violence prevention and healthy relationships.

Based on the outcomes of the pilot, Rights, Respect, and Responsibility appears to meet the instructional and experiential criteria to proceed to the next phase of ELPS's curriculum review and the Sex Education Advisory Board's recommendation process for replacing the high school HIV/Sex education curriculum.

Based on the pilot results, Rights, Respect, and Responsibility would not be a suitable replacement for the middle school HIV/sex education curriculum, and an alternative curriculum enhancement option should be sought.