**SEX EDUCATION: What Do Nebraska Students Want?**

Results from 2021 Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) research project. Data collected by youth, from youth, for the improved outcomes of youth.

Young people across Nebraska are asking for better sex education. With a comprehensive, inclusive, medically-accurate education, young people will feel more comfortable and safe in the classroom and be equipped with the skills and information they need to plan for their futures and live a healthier, happier life.

**WHO DID WE INTERVIEW? (n=204)**

- **STUDENTS ACROSS NEBRASKA**: 204
- **STUDENTS COMPLETED FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS**: 21
- **AGES 15-19**:
- **OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE FROM RURAL AREAS OUTSIDE OF MAJOR CITIES***: 24%

*Omaha and Lincoln*

**62.3%** OF STUDENTS RECEIVED SEX EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL.

**THAT NUMBER CHANGES SIGNIFICANTLY BASED ON RACE AND ETHNICITY**

- **69.8%** WHITE
- **50%** HISPANIC AND/OR LATINO/A/X
- **44%** OTHER STUDENTS OF COLOR

**LGBT NEBRASKA STUDENTS FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE PARTICIPATING IN CURRENT SEX ED CLASSES**

Nebraska students need inclusive, trauma-informed sex education by trained teachers and affirming, protective school environments:

- 40% of students feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their classes.
- Over half of LGBT+ students (54%) reported that being a member of the LGBT+ community made it harder for them to participate in class.
- 83.9% of male youth felt comfortable in class while only 54.7% of female youth felt comfortable.

**STUDENTS WHO ARE SOMEWHAT OR VERY COMFORTABLE IN SEX ED CLASS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Comfortable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBGT (n=96)</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls/Women</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender (Straight)</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys/Men (n=55)</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
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</table>
This research is a product of the 2020-2021 Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) internship with the Adolescent Health Project (AHP), an initiative of the Women’s Fund of Omaha that provides sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education and health care services to all genders, 15-24 years of age. Evaluation team led by Catalyze.

Young people need medically-accurate and age-appropriate sources of sex ed.

42% of Nebraska students rely on pornography as a current source of information on the mechanics of sex. Young people in Nebraska are learning more about how sex works from media, pornography and/or the internet than from school, family and/or a medical professional.

For all topics, except abstinence, youth marked school-based sex ed as a desired source significantly more than as their current source of information.

Students overwhelmingly reported the need for more information on these essential topics:

- sexual orientation (50%)
- gender identity (38.1%)
- consent and healthy relationships (47.6%)
- skills and resources (28.6%)

Research indicates that young people are relying heavily on the internet/social media for sexual health information, even though few young people want to get it online and don’t feel confident in their media literacy.

Nebraska students want sex education before they need it, not after.

Students report learning basic concepts in elementary school is important:

- 57.1% reported early education on consent, healthy relationships, sexual orientation and gender identity in elementary school is vital.
- None of the students thought they should have waited to learn about it until high school.

Parents and caregivers need more support for effective communication on sexual health topics. Almost half of Nebraska students rely on family for information on abstinence and healthy relationships, but few students receive info from their family on:

- gender identity (17.2%)
- reproductive health (17.2%)
- sexual orientation (19.6%)

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