

Getting It Right From the Start: Age-Appropriate Sexuality Education in the Pre-School and Lower School Grades

With Deborah Roffman, MS, CSE, CFLE

This workshop is appropriate for teachers, counselors and administrators at the Early Childhood and Elementary School levels.

It is vital that families and schools proactively establish themselves as the primary—as in, first and most important—reference points in children’s lives around issues of sex, gender, and reproduction. When adults put off, avoid altogether, or water down this process, they virtually guarantee that other sources, including peers, older children and teens, social media, the Internet, marketers, and mass media, will “get there first.” In a world where the lines between the adult world and the child’s world continue to vanish, the default option of deferring to these sources becomes increasingly harmful. Conversely, when adults engage young children directly around these issues, they significantly impact the course of healthy sexual development.

In independent education, the great majority of preschool and lower schools teachers are inherently capable of guiding meaningful conversation with younger children about human sexuality, especially when understood in its broadest sense. This day-long, interactive workshop will provide the awareness and skills teachers need to comfortably and confidently bring this topic into their curriculum.

Key Topics Covered:

- Learning to look at the topic of sexuality through the eyes of young children, and to think pedagogically, rather than emotionally, about this subject matter
- Addressing the self-sabotaging “double standards” most schools erroneously apply to teaching about sexuality in the early grades that make us afraid of the “wrong” things
- “Disappearing” the misplaced anxieties parents, schools and teachers commonly apply to broaching the subject of sexuality
- Creating authentic partnerships with parents around supporting healthy sexual development
- Anticipating, diffusing, and responding successfully to potential “push back” from parents or others in the school community
- Establishing and incorporating crucial and truly age- and stage-appropriate sexuality education benchmarks for children ages 3-12
- Designing a spiraling, developmentally based curriculum
- Creating classroom environments supportive of safe and open discussion
- Approaching—and inviting—discussion of “sensitive,” value-laden issues in the classroom
- Responding to children’s spontaneous questions with age-appropriate content and within a developmentally appropriate context
- Educating around sexual and gender diversity
- Utilizing sexual language comfortably and appropriately in the classroom
- Articulating the universal values at the base of your sexuality program
- Enlisting/providing ongoing, explicit, and effective administrative support

About the Speaker:

Deborah Roffman, MS, a nationally acknowledged expert on human sexuality education in independent school settings, teaches this topic in the lower, middle, and upper schools at The Park School of Baltimore, and has taught as well at several other schools in the Baltimore/Washington area. She has consulted nationally with more than 300 private and public schools and is the author of three books for parents and teachers, most recently *Talk to Me First: Everything You Need to Know to Become your Kids' Go-To Person About Sex* (Perseus, 2012).

Ms. Roffman is in constant demand as a speaker and workshop leader for PreK-12 parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and trustees. She brings decades of classroom experience to her presentations and her trainings and consultations around such issues as: barriers to implementing truly age and stage appropriate PreK-12 sexuality education and how to diffuse them; families and schools as authentic partners in nurturing sexually healthy children and adolescents; the application of values education (including religious values) to sexuality curricula; sexuality education scope and sequence; and best-practice classroom approaches. She presents on a full range of topics connected to sex, gender, and reproduction, including such timely issues as sexual assault/consent and sexual and gender diversity.

Debbie is widely known for her ability to help parents and school personnel embrace comprehensive sexuality education from the earliest grades, through her laser focus on clear and present development needs, our collective adult responsibilities in meeting them, and the common ground of values that parents and schools deeply share but often overlook.

Debbie Roffman is one of Time Magazine's 16 Top Parenting Experts for the 21st Century
<http://time.com/106024/parenting-experts-advice/>