



Sexual Health Education Instructional Materials Review

REAL Essentials (originally published as “Get REAL”)

Year Published: 2013

Publisher: Center for Relationship Education

Website: www.myrelationshipcenter.org

Full or Supplemental: Full

Grade Level: Middle and High School

Student Population: General

Duration/Number of Lessons: 7 full units, 5-14 lessons per unit, 1 evaluation/closure unit

Evidence-Based - CDC or HHS/OAH registry; National Campaign database; ETR database: Yes, according to publisher; not found on any national registries

Healthy Youth Act Compliance: No (see ratings and reviewer comments)

AIDS Omnibus Act Compliance: n/a

National Standards Alignment: No; “health and science standards” informed development of the curriculum

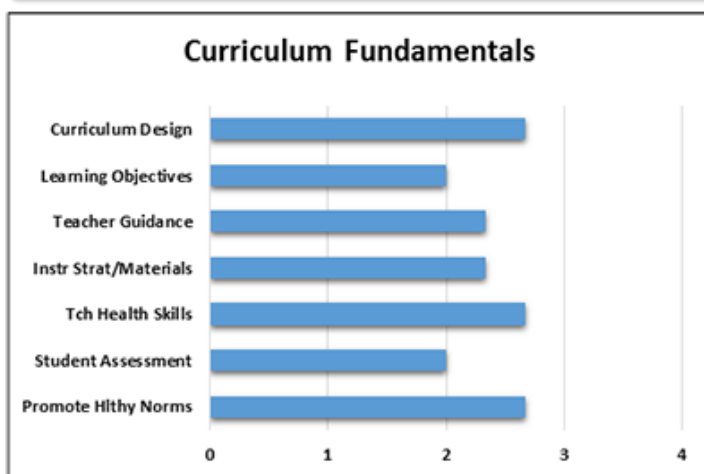
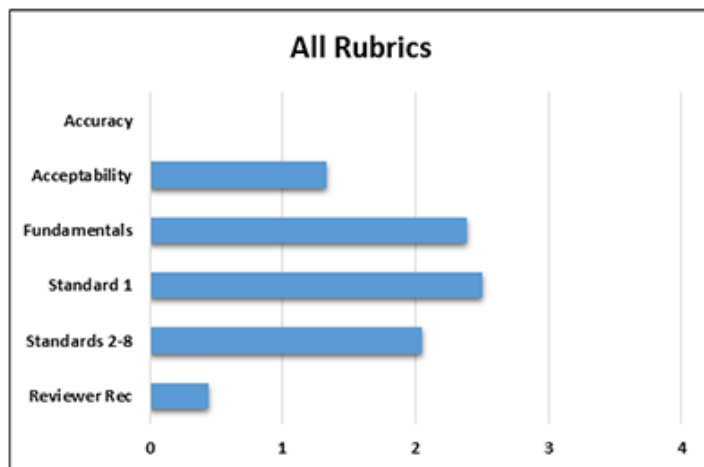
Format and Features: One 3-ring binder

Professional Development: Available, recommended, not required

PRIMARY TOPICAL AREAS

- Anatomy and Physiology
- Puberty/Adolescent Development
- Pregnancy & Reproduction
- Contraception
- Abstinence
- STD Prevention
- HIV Prevention
- Identity/Orientation
- Healthy Relationships
- Other
 - Abortion
 - Access to Services
 - Character Building
 - Condom Use
 - Human Rights
 - Infant Care Simulation
 - Marriage and Parenthood
 - Refusal Skills
 - Sex Trafficking

OVERALL RATINGS



REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

Review 1

Rev ID 13

Overall I think this curriculum is lacking as a comprehensive sexual health curriculum. Information that is missing includes sending sexual information through email, text, etc.; risky sexual behaviors; effectiveness of condoms; contraceptive options and their effectiveness; conception; sexual orientation; gender identity; and tolerance of others due to sexuality differences as an example of some concerns.

Review 2

Rev ID 16

REAL Essentials is a curriculum that incorporates a training program in addition to the materials I reviewed. I did not participate in the training, which is a requirement of this program so my comments will only address the written curriculum materials itself. The curriculum has many reinforcement skill practice activities for building healthy relationship skills and risk factors to consider, promoted heterosexual marriage throughout the curriculum as a primary focus, provided some risk avoidance education but as related to heterosexual references, and provided many ice breaker activities. There was a section in the curriculum materials addressing commitment/leadership/job readiness which I did not feel was applicable to the bulk of the program and was out of place.

Having to attend a training in order to use this curriculum is an additional cost, something that I feel most school districts would not have funding for and was a deterrent for me with this program. In addition to the fact that it was marriage focused to the heterosexual lifestyle, it as well does not meet current health standards in addressing gender orientation, sexual orientation, same sex practices, risk factors within different populations, proper use/misuse of birth control as a risk reduction factor, so it does not serve all students which was another factor that would not allow me to use this curriculum.

The community or district would as well have to agree with the philosophy behind the directive of being a character based model of life, love and leadership education as it was outlined in materials. The optimal family structure to raise children, biological mom/dad/adopted/married family again does not include all family models, so it is a very single focused curriculum. Equality references throughout the program were a weak area and all lessons would not be a full class period and making that deeper connection to the learning target or standard as well was not a strong point. Some lessons had this better than others, but no measurable outcomes with rubrics or assessments for skills were provided.

I felt this curriculum was better suited to grades 9-12 as the maturity level required for the materials presented throughout were too advanced for the 6-8 level.

There were some excellent lessons throughout with engaging activities, but being such a single focused program and not serving all sexual orientations throughout made this something I would have to supplement into the curriculum in order to use it and as outlined in the directions, the curriculum is presented to be used in the manner outlined and not changed.

Review 3

Rev ID 12

The Real Essentials curriculum provides many opportunities for students who are choosing to abstain from sex to explore the benefits of this choice. Lesson plans often use interactive activities that are designed to reach different



learning styles. However, educators using this curriculum may find it culturally limited in many ways. Real Essentials has a bias for marriage and relationships in general as a construct between a man and a woman, which may prove to be quite shaming of students who come from same sex households. Gay and lesbian and transgender students attending these sessions may find themselves completely left out, further stigmatizing their sexual orientation and gender expression. Some of the analogies in Real Essentials are intended to be serious learning activities though they come off as comical and outdated, with the potential to create an emotionally unsafe atmosphere in the classroom. Educators should use caution with such lessons that include examples of "renewed virginity", "raging hormones", "fish bowl to a fish as marriage is to sex", "mock wedding ceremony with bride and groom", or referring to a commercial sex worker as a "hooker." Gender examples used throughout the curriculum may reinforce negative stereotypes. Statistics used in the curriculum are outdated and carry exaggerations. Looking deeper, one can find a clear religious bias in Real Essentials. The curriculum is endorsed by the author of "A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage." Its reference list includes a conservative Christian lobbying group, and uses information from organizations that have been accused of distorting data. In summary, this curriculum would not be suitable for the diverse cultural backgrounds, family structures, identities, and learning needs of our students in the public education system.

