



Sexual Health Education Instructional Materials Review

Curriculum Title: Love Notes 3.0

Year Published: 2018

Publisher: Dibble Institute

Website: <https://www.dibbleinstitute.org/love-notes-3-0/>

Full or Supplemental: Supplemental

Grade Level: Secondary and young adult

Student Population: General

Duration/Number of Lessons: 13 lessons

Format and Features: Print and digital

Evidence-based/informed: Yes

National Standards Alignment: Not evident

Healthy Youth Act Compliance: With modification (supplementing with birth control/STD prevention information)

AIDS Omnibus Act Compliance: N/A

Bias Free Materials: Yes, if teacher's guide is utilized for inclusive messaging

Primary Topical Areas (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abortion | <input type="checkbox"/> Identity/Orientation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Abstinence | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy & Reproduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anatomy and Physiology | <input type="checkbox"/> Puberty/Adolescent Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication/Decision-making | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Refusal Skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Condom Use | <input type="checkbox"/> STD Prevention |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contraception | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy relationships | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HIV Prevention | |

Reviewer Comments:

Reviewer 1

While the curriculum is generally inclusive, disabled students are not represented at all. LGBTQ students are represented in the Teacher's Guide, with many images in all materials featuring same-sex couples. However, providing inclusive instruction relies entirely on teachers using suggestions and language from the teacher's guide. The student materials are not obviously inclusive, although not homophobic either. There seems to be a light emphasis on marriage as the "best" outcome, including links to faith-based "couples compatibility" resources that emphasize marriage (lesson 3). The approach is also lightly fear-based, with more emphasis on potential dangers of sexual intimacy than benefits - though to the author's credit, benefits are addressed, there is a recognition that some teens choose to be sexually active, and healthy sexual relationships discussed. Gender roles and stereotypes are discussed to some extent, with some discussion of power dynamics in relationships based on gender. Goals for each lesson are provided, but no measurable objectives and no assessments provided (other than student self-assessments that are not turned in to the teacher).

Reviewer 203

I would not recommend using this curriculum as a strategy for sexual assault prevention. It hardly has any content on sexual assault and does not include at all anything about gender roles, which is critical to sexual assault prevention. It does mention consent, but when it does, it's all from the perspective of "saying no," and not from the perspective of "respecting a no" when someone else says no to you. Several victim blaming type comments including "being quiet, never arguing, and always agreeing to keep the peace can put you at risk of being walked all over or even abused." The focus should be on teaching students how to have healthy relationships, how to ask for and respect consent, and breaking down traditional gender stereotypes that we know are linked to sexual violence. Also, an important note: the consent handout is not accurate for Washington State and the laws around age of consent (which are complicated) so if you use this curriculum, make sure to fully understand the age of consent laws in WA because high school students have a lot of questions usually on this topic.

Pros: It is a comprehensive curriculum in the sense that it has 13 lessons, all interactive activities, many of which seem would be fun for kids. For example, they have personality test activity that seems very fun for high school age students, but not sure if it's research-based at all to be linked to healthy vs. unhealthy relationships. It includes a parent component which is good. It encourages students to do a lot of self-reflection, think about their priorities, expectations and values for themselves, and talk to their parents about it too. Lots of support materials, clear instructions and goals for each lesson. Written in a way that is accessible for youth to understand using scenarios, media, metaphors, etc.

Cons: Very focused on promoting marriage, which seems like more of a moral/ value issue (that should not be taught in public schools) than a scientifically based health promotion skill or knowledge. Also seems very shaming for the (many) students that come from single family homes or divorced families or have parent in committed relationships who chose not to get married. Marriage comes up throughout the entire curriculum and seems very judgment based.

Some examples:

"But the fact is today, many children are born to unmarried parents who are not committed to each other and to raising a child together."

“Many young adults today, in the U.S., move in with their partner. Next to sex, it’s the most common slide. There is no evidence that it helps in choosing a good marriage partner.”

“This sequence really matters: 1) Education 2) Work 3) Marriage (before children)”

These are all examples of teaching values and not being inclusive of all families, which a sexual health curriculum should not be doing.

Many mentions of lesbian, gay, bisexual but no positive examples of these types of relationships that I saw. Very heteronormative, meaning that almost all examples were based on male-female relationships, and even worse, reinforcing gender stereotypes about men and women. Most of the examples are with a guy who is obsessed with sex, or the guy who is abusing the girl, the girl who is not assertive, etc. An example from a discussion question “How does a boy feel when a boyfriend, stepfather or father abuses his mother?” This is problematic on so many levels (heteronormative examples, reinforcing the idea that the effect of domestic violence in the home is different for girls than boys, etc.)

Does not have a prevention focus. Does not talk about people who are abusive can change, and what help is out there for them. Also does not have a promising outlook for survivors of abuse either. One example from the script: “Once a person gets attached an intimate terrorist [BTW I’ve never heard that term] may not let their partner go. Many victims get stalked, have to go into hiding, and tragically, many end up dead.” First of all, this sounds somewhat victim-blaming because they got “too attached” rather than putting the onus on the perpetrator. Secondly, what type of message is this to people who are currently causing harm or being harmed?

One of the most concerning was the opening activity where there is a jar with mostly red marbles (representing a bad relationship and a few green marbles (representing the good). This is supposed to represent all their relationships they will have in their life. What a dismal outlook on life and on the people around them. We should be promoting that healthy relationships are the norm.

The whole curriculum seems somewhat pushy with the values, rather than focusing on concepts and skills that are actually linked to sexual assault prevention. There is a lot of negative judgment and scare tactics used related to STDs, domestic violence/ past traumas, unmarried parents, abuse, etc. I would be concerned about the shame/ judgment that may be experienced by students who: are already parents, who are having sex, have witnessed Domestic violence in their families, have been sexually assaulted, do not come from a family with married, heterosexual parents, and others.

Reviewer 206

Love Notes 3.0 was a very comprehensive curriculum that was originally created for pregnancy prevention but discusses many other topics like sexual violence, dating violence, healthy communication, consent, and media literacy. The curriculum relies heavily on music and other media to convey each theme, which is a very engaging format but has potential to become outdated unless the facilitator updates the media choices every so often. There is a significant emphasis on personal responsibility, which is positive when used in conjunction with preventing first-time perpetration but could be easily misconstrued in lessons about abuse where the message may be interpreted that the victim has a personal responsibility to avoid risky behavior and situations. There are also several sections where stereotypes about men and women are reinforced, like the idea that females are inherently more emotional than males. This curriculum is definitely useful with a wide range of communities because it can be tailored so easily, but facilitators may have to be choosy about which lessons they use or don't use to avoid reinforcing outdated ideas about prevention and abuse.