



Building capacity for sexual health education.



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Connect and Learn!

Network Meetings for School District Administrators

Join WA PREP staff and school district administrators from across the state for quarterly network meetings to:

- Discuss and share updates on sexual health education requirements and related policies
- Share successes and lessons learned
- Develop/get feedback on plans to support institutionalizing CSHE in your district
- Share strategies for parent/caregiver engagement and community outreach

[Click here to register](#) for the next CSHE Network Meeting!

At this month's Network Meeting we will be joined by Laurie Dils from OSPI. Laurie will walk us through the new CSHE reporting requirements for districts and review the results of their most recent curricula review..

Thursday, April 21st, 10:30am-12:00pm

WA PREP

We're Here to Help!

Whether you are currently implementing Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) or just beginning to develop a plan to meet the new [Washington State requirements](#), we have resources to support you. Our expert team is available to support with curriculum selection, working with your school board, educating parents/caregivers and community, providing curriculum walk-throughs and core skills training for teachers, and more. Contact Christine Hagstrom at chagstrom@cardeaservices.org for more information

Why Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) is Essential for Students with Disabilities

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) is crucial to student success, including students with disabilities. [1 in 4 people have a physical or developmental disability](#), as do [14% of all students in public schools](#), meaning it is likely that you will have students in your classroom with disabilities.

Why is CSHE important for students with disabilities?

Like all young people, students with disabilities need information and skills related to:

- Basic anatomy and physiology to facilitate effective physical care and understand bodily changes throughout puberty and adulthood
- How to engage in safe and healthy sexual activity
- Affirmative consent and boundary-setting to promote personal safety and autonomy
- Healthy relationships to build skills for navigating relationships with family, friends, partners, caregivers, and others
- Healthy body image and self-esteem

Many people assume that young people with disabilities are either asexual or hypersexual. However, young people with disabilities have the same desires for relationships and information as their peers do.

Therefore, affirming that young people with disabilities deserve autonomy, healthy relationships, and sexual fulfillment can help young people make better decisions about their health and lead to more satisfying lives.

Did you know?

There are specific reasons why CSHE is especially important for students with disabilities. A recent study conducted by [the Arc](#) found that:

- Even though “almost half of people with [intellectual disabilities (ID)] will experience at least 10 sexually abusive incidents in their lifetime”, CSHE curricula has historically [ignored the need](#) to instruct students with disabilities.
- Eighty percent ([80% of women with developmental disabilities have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives](#)).
- Lastly, 11% of child abuse victims – 1 out of every 5 children - are people with intellectual or physical disabilities, while [caregiver abuse occurs in 40% of](#) care relationships involving a disability.

Teaching students about affirmative consent, healthy relationships, safer sex, boundary setting, and knowledge of their bodies will support them in communicating with trusted adults about uncomfortable/unsafe situations and in advocating for themselves within relationships.

Self-contained and blended classrooms

Some classrooms are self-contained, or entirely made up of students in Special Education (SPED). Others are blended (made up of both SPED and non-SPED students). Each setting is unique, and it is essential that CSHE be taught to SPED students in all types of classrooms.

Many OSPI-approved curricula have sexual health education lessons that are adapted for students with disabilities, and organizations like [Mad Hatter Wellness](#) have resources for educators in both SPED-specific and blended classrooms.

For more details on how to effectively teach CSHE to students with disabilities, [please check our handout](#) on SPED adaptations, tools, and tips for inclusivity.

What does this mean for educators?

Regardless of whether you teach in a SPED-specific or blended classroom, a SPED lens for all students is important when teaching CSHE. Here are some basic principles you can implement:

1. **Use descriptions of sexual activity that are inclusive to all types of sex.** Instead of thinking of sex as oral, vaginal, and anal, explore what it means for any type of physical contact to be sexual to someone and talk about affirmative consent and communication in this context.
2. **Avoid shaming students** if they have reactions to sexual health topics that may be considered inappropriate or outside the bounds of what you feel is “normal.” Affirm students while gently guiding them toward respectful, calm discussion of topics.
3. **Meet students where they are.** Every student comes to the classroom with different toolkits, backgrounds, and sensory processing skills. The important piece is that they are learning, even if students in your classroom are learning at different rates.
4. **Do not make assumptions based on what you perceive about students.** Someone may have a disability that is not visible. This does not mean that they do not need accommodation.
5. **Provide a range of options for student participation.** Whatever the reason, students may not be able to participate in activities as they are designed in curricula. Work with students to determine the best way for them to participate.
6. **Internalize accessibility.** Sometimes, we “check the box” of using inclusive language or providing surface-level accommodations without thinking about what this means in a broader educational context. Review every lesson with the goal of making it accessible for the students you have in your classroom, with the knowledge that “accessibility” can mean many different things. Work with your students and treat them as the experts on what they need to succeed.

Unlike many other identities that remain static throughout the course of our lives, someone who is non-disabled or neuro-typical can become disabled at any moment. Disability inclusion is therefore important not only for students who currently have a disability, but also for the many students who may one day have a disability.

Additionally, some disabilities are perceivable (often referred to as “visible”), while others are imperceptible (often referred to as “invisible”). Therefore, regardless of whether you think someone does or does not have a disability, it is important as an educator to remember to always plan lessons with differentiation in mind, and use language that is inclusive of all students.

Thank you for all that you do to keep students safe, affirmed, healthy, and happy!

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