Sex Education in America

Imagine this: your country has over one million new teenagers get pregnant each year, you see various STD and chlamydia outbreaks in various states, including high schools, and your country is the LEADING country in both of these pregnancy and STD rates. Yes, I am talking about America. America is the number one country with the highest teenage pregnancy and STD rates. The cause of this is the continuous abstinence-only sex education programs that are being taught to children in middle school and high school. In Michael Moore’s movie “Where to Invade Next,” he travels around the world to different countries and finds various lifestyles that people live to try to be the happiest they can be. Michael Moore is a documentary filmmaker satirist, he made a film called “roger & me” and it had been one of the biggest movie’s in America at one point. One of the countries that he went to was France. In France, they teach their students about love; particularly, sexual love. They teach kids how to be safe about sex to prevent outbreaks of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancy. However, America continues to only teach kids abstinence-only programs in a majority of school districts. Compared to France, America’s pregnancy rate is doubled what theirs is. Therefore, if someone were to ask me “Which social systems/institutions need to be repaired/strengthened to improve America’s culture”, my answer would be sex education. America should start teaching children in all districts effective sex education because it lowers pregnancy rates, lowers the number of sexual intercourse, and increases the use of contraception’s.

There are plenty of reasons to believe that abstinence-only programs are not beneficial, however some people believe they are. In the article “Abstinence” by Rupal Christine Gupta (a pediatrician who received her medical degree from the University of Pittsburg School of Medicine and has been in practice for 6-10 years), she argues that abstinence works 100%. If people do not have sex, then the egg cannot be fertilized, and there is no chance of pregnancy. When someone practices abstinence, they do not need to use any barriers or pills to prevent pregnancy. It also prevents all possibilities of receiving any kind of STD. The author also argues that there is peer pressure around teens to start becoming sexually active, but she explains that most teens are actually not having sex. The main point of this article is that if someone practices abstinence, then they have absolutely no change of getting pregnant or getting any STD’s.

Although abstinence will 100% prevent pregnancy and STD’s, teaching students effective sex education has proven to be so much more beneficial than abstinence-only program’s. The first reason is because effective sex education has proven to lower pregnancy rates. A proven fact that effective sex education lowers these rates is from Michael Moore’s movie “Where to Invade Next.” When he went to France, he learned that the students learn about sexual love and that France’s pregnancy rate is lower than half of ours. We already knew this from earlier on. However, another source that has proven effective sex education lowers pregnancy rates is from the article “Abstinence Only Until Marriage Programs” written by Pamela Kohler. She is a nurse and completed her training from John Hopkins University, worked in HIV care for 7 years, received her PhD for nursing and MPH in Health Services from the University of Washington, and have done research for HIV care, adolescent HIV service delivery, and sex education involving pregnancy and STD’s. This article focuses on a study that involved 1,719 students ages 15-19. They were asked 2 questions about the sex education they have received in their lifetime. They were then categorized into 3 groups; kids who solely received abstinence-only education, kids who received both abstinence and birth control education, and kids who received no sexual education whatsoever. The study concluded that kids who received both abstinence and birth control lessons were 50% less likely to be involved in teen pregnancy. Also, the kids who received abstinence-only lessons had about an identical risk of being involved in teen pregnancy compared to the kids who had no sexual education at all! From these results, it is clearly shown that abstinence and birth control lessons lower pregnancy rates, and abstinence only programs do not. Another article called “Sex Education has Failed” written by Kristen Bailey (a published author and editor of young adult books, some including “At Issue Series – Cosmetic Surgery” and “How Should Prisons Treat Inmates”) compared our sex education in America to 5 other countries that are similar to ours; Canada’s, England’s, France’s, the Netherland’s, and Sweden’s. Sex education programs in these countries are based off of policies favoring sex education, openness about sex, consistent messages through society, and access to contraception. When comparing the pregnancy rates from these countries with America’s, those countries rates are lower than half of our pregnancy rates. This is yet another study and analysis that places who teach student’s effective sex education pregnancy rates are lower than places who teach students solely about abstinence.

The second reason why America should teach all students effective sex education is because it lowers the number of sexual intercourse in general. The same study from the article “Abstinence Only Until Marriage Programs” received data that the kids who were taught both abstinence and birth control lessons reported lower numbers of having sexual intercourse. When the data from the abstinence-only kids was looked at, these kids did not have any reduced numbers when it came to sexual intercourse after taking the course. The amount of intercourse that happened between them stayed the same. Another article that conducted and analyzed a different study showed that rates of sexual activity are lower with students who received effected sex education compared to students who have not. This article is called “Sex Education Delays Teens’ Sexual Activity, Study Shows” and was written by Stephanie Pappas. She is a writer for LiveScience.com and studies psychology and neuroscience, she graduated for US Santa Cruz science writing programs. This study involved 4,691 teens from the ages 15-19 answered questions about the type of sexual education they have received in their lifetime. The results were about 33% of girls and 55% of boys received education on both abstinence and birth control usage, 20% of girls and boys only learned about abstinence, and 16% of girls and 24% of boys did not receive any sex education at all. From these results, 77% of females and 78% of males that received some type of sex education had sexual intercourse before the age of 20. For the teens that did not receive any sex education, 86% of females and 88% of males were sexually active before the age of 20. This study shows how teaching student’s proper sex education has presumably lower rates of sexually active teenagers. Lastly, in one of the previous articles already mentioned, “Sex Education has Failed,” different sex education programs that are taught around the country were looked at, interpreted, and were found to be very effective. One program called “Reducing the Risk” involved high school students participating in experimental activities to build skills and self-efficacy. The results were that more students who had been abstinent before the program tended to remain abstinent afterwards. Another program called “Postponing Sexual Involvement” informs kids of social and peer pressure to become sexually active, helps them make and apply resistant skills, and teaches them about human sexuality, decision making, and contraceptives. One result from this program is that there was a decreased amount of student’s that became sexually active after participating in it. The final program is called “Healthy Oakland Teens” and it teaches middle school kids about basic sex and drug education and high school kids about values, decision making, communication, and condom use. After a year, the students in these programs have reported to be less involved in sexual activities. From looking at these specific sex education programs, there is evidence that teaching student’s effective sex education lowers the rate of sexual intercourse.

The third reason why America should teach effective sex education is because it increases the use of contraceptives. From a previous article, “Sex Education Delays Teens’ Sexual Activity, Study Shows,” the kids who received sex education on both abstinence and birth control usage were more likely to use contraception when they were sexually active compared to the kids who received to sex education at all. The same study also shows that females who received both programs were especially likely to use protection during intercourse. This study has shown that teaching student’s effective sex education has proven to increase the use of contraceptives. The other article that further proves this is an article that was already mentioned, “Sex Education has failed.” In the “Reducing the Risk” program involving high school kids participating in activities, the rates of unprotected sex when students became sexually active decreased. In other words, the use of contraceptives increased. Also, in the “Postponing Sexual Involvement” program that helps kids apply resistant skills, there was an increased amount of contraceptives among females in the program. This further proves the point that teaching student’s effective sex education increases the use of contraceptives.

To conclude, America should teach students in all school districts effective sex education. The first reason why they should is because it lowers pregnancy rates. Sex education in different countries teaches kids different things than America does. It teaches kids a more effective program, and those countries have less than half the percentage of teen pregnancy compared to America. Also, a large study conducted between student’s ages 15-19 has shown that teens who receive effective sex education are 50% less likely to be involved in teen pregnancy compared to students that are not in effective sex educations. The second reason is because effective sex education lowers the number of sexual intercourse that happens between students. In 2 different and very large studies, the students that received both abstinence and birth control education reported lower numbers of sexual activities, especially sexual intercourse. The students that did not receive effective sex education reported higher numbers of being involved in sexual intercourse. Lastly, America should teach effective sex education because it increases the use of contraceptives for students. Students who were taught effective sex education reported a higher percentage of using contraceptives and lower percentages of having unprotected sex. America should teach all students in all school districts effective sex education because it could lower the teen pregnancy rate in the country, lower the amount of sexual intercourse between students, and increase the use of contraceptives.