



LGBTQ Sex Ed & Safety A Survey of New York City High School Students

The New York Civil Liberties Union's **Teen Activist Project** and **Youth Organizing Institute** are peer educator and organizing programs for high school students in New York City. In recent years, students from both programs have identified bullying and harassment and the lack of comprehensive sex education as major problems in New York City schools.

Sex Education in New York City

Sex education must be taught within a required semester of health class in New York City public schools, both in middle school and high school. Yet, many students do not receive sex education until their senior year of high school. LGBTQ identities and relationships are often unaddressed.

In 2016, TAP and YOI members distributed a two-page anonymous survey to a non-representative sample of their peers asking general questions about health and sex education offered in their high school. It was completed by 302 students from 25 schools.

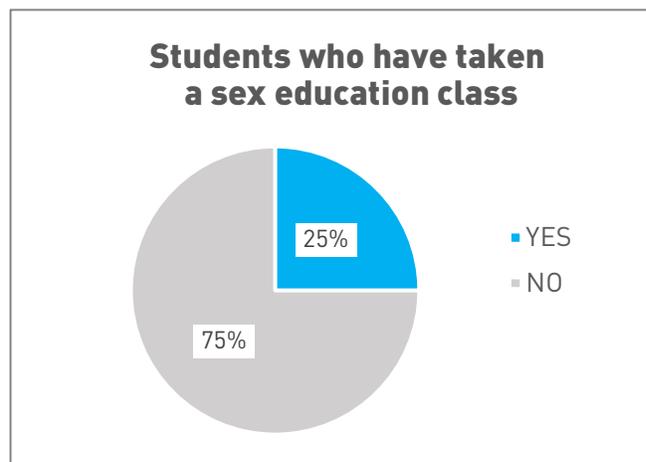
Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

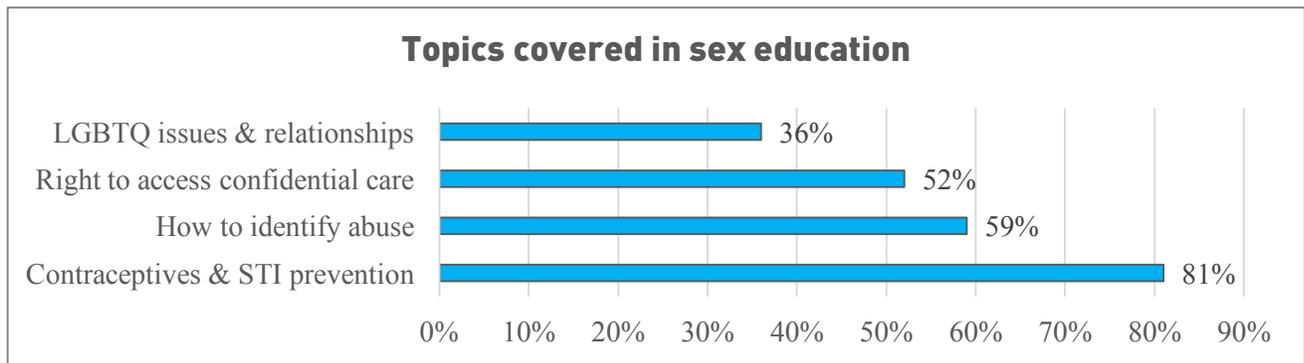
The Dignity for All Students Act requires New York state schools to have at least one staff member trained to respond to bullying and harassment based on race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex. However, many students are unable to identify the designated coordinator at their school or are unfamiliar with the law itself.

In 2017, TAP members distributed a four-question survey to a non-representative sample of their peers about familiarity with DASA. The survey was completed by 278 students from 12 public schools across all New York City boroughs.

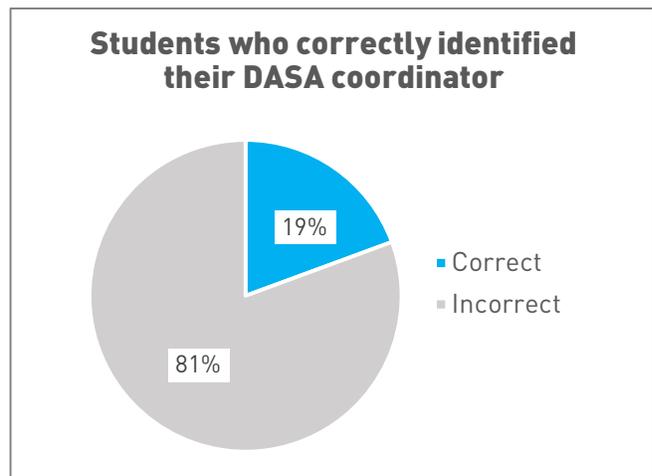
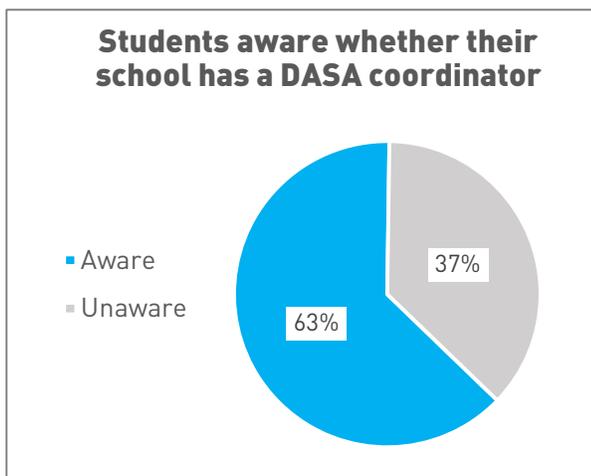
Key Findings

- Of students surveyed, 93 percent said they had taken a health class, but only 25 percent said they had taken a class focused on sex-education.
- 81 percent reported learning about contraceptives and/or STI prevention, but only half had learned about the right to access confidential health care without involving a parent.
- Just 36 percent had learned about LGBTQ issues and relationships.





- Half of students surveyed said their primary source of information about sex was friends, while 11 percent said that they had not received or could ask no one about sex-related information.
- Eighty-eight percent of students did not know that New York City schools are required to have a DASA coordinator. Only 63 percent said their school had one, and only 19 percent could correctly identify theirs (up from nine percent in our 2013 survey).



- Confusion surrounding DASA coordinators is not unique to students. When NYCLU staff called schools to check the names of coordinators, some schools did not know who their coordinator was. One coordinator did not know that they were assigned the role.

Recommendations to Schools

- **Increase training for all school staff** and School Safety Officers (SSOs). Include addressing and preventing discrimination and harassment.
- **Make information about DASA accessible.** Ensure students understand their rights and schools' responsibilities. This can include letters to students and parents, updated information on school websites (as required), posters on campus and including information in morning announcements.
- **Incorporate positive examples of LGBTQ identities and relationships in sex education.** Having LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum improves school climate and benefits all students in the classroom.
- **Inform students of their right to receive confidential health care,** including sexual and mental health care, as well as resources about LGBTQ friendly service providers such as Planned Parenthood or The Door.