

# HEALTHY STUDENTS, HEALTHY SCHOOLS

## Pass Comprehensive Sex Education

Many public school districts across New York provide sex education that is inaccurate, incomplete, or biased - and some schools provide none at all. New York students deserve better. Comprehensive sex education supports young people to make healthy decisions and have healthy relationships, and is critical to the well-being and educational outcomes of young people.

A-6512 (Nolan/Gottfried)/S-4844 (Metzger/Montgomery) requires public schools to teach medically accurate and inclusive K-12 comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate and reflects national standards and best practices.

### THE PROBLEM

There is currently no requirement that New York schools provide any sex education. Of the public schools across New York that do provide sex education, the curriculum is often inaccurate, incomplete, or biased. It often fails to prepare students to make healthy, informed, and consensual decisions about relationships. LGBTQ relationships are often stigmatized or ignored entirely. Even basic information about anatomy is inaccurate, and materials often reinforce negative gender stereotypes and sexism.

**Lack of education about sexual health leads to high rates of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections that can hinder students' education.**

Currently, 3 in 10 young women in New York become pregnant at least once before their 20th birthday, and teens aged 15 to 19 make up more than half of new sexually-transmitted infection cases.

**The #MeToo movement has shown the pervasiveness of sexual violence and the need for better education about consent and healthy relationships.**

Nationally, more than two thirds of teenagers who are or have been in a relationship report experiencing some form of sexual, physical or emotional abuse.

**LGBTQ students in New York are more than twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to report intimate partner violence.**

Among those who report being bullied on school property, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students were almost twice as likely as heterosexual students to report not going to school because they felt unsafe.

The lack of consistent comprehensive sexual health education in New York leaves our students ill equipped to keep themselves safe and healthy, and results in significant health care costs related to unintended pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections. Without comprehensive sexual health education, stereotypes, misinformation, and toxic relationships will continue to spread.

## THE SOLUTION

Public health experts and researchers agree – comprehensive sex education empowers and protects young people and fosters healthy development. Across political party lines, parents overwhelmingly support sex education in schools. We need K-12 comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate, medically accurate, and inclusive.

### **Comprehensive Sex Education helps students to be healthy and safe, and is a money-saver for NY.**

Accurate information about anatomy, health care, and decision-making not only improves educational outcomes by keeping kids in school, it also helps reduce spending on treatment of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies by millions of dollars. For every dollar invested in sex education, the state stands to save \$2.65 in reduced health care costs.

### **Comprehensive Sex Education promotes inclusiveness and respect.**

Removing the stigma around discussions of sexuality and gender helps to combat discrimination, bullying, and harassment. Education that helps young people understand sexual orientation and gender identity promotes respect for all youth.

### **Comprehensive Sex Education is comprehensive:**

Sex education is more than just teaching young people how to avoid unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections; it is a critical tool for building a culture of consent and preventing sexual assault and violence. Beyond the birds and the bees, our schools must support students as they learn about relationships, love, and health care.

### **Comprehensive Sex Education is age-appropriate:**

Kindergarteners need to learn skills for healthy friendships, communication, and personal hygiene just as much as teenagers need medically-accurate, non-stigmatizing education about health care and relationships. Experts and researchers agree that acquiring skills in self-awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making should begin in elementary school and continue through subsequent grade levels so that students can build on their knowledge as they mature.

Albany must act to ensure every student receives comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education. **New York's young people deserve no less.**

For more information, please visit [nyclu.org](http://nyclu.org)



MAY 2019