

# OPINION

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## Sexual education must be faced openly

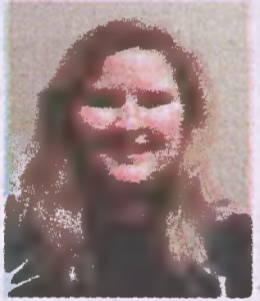


LET'S TALK  
SEX

COURTESY OF PHOTOCELEBRATIONS

Were you taught everything you needed to know about sex, sexuality and relationships in school?

Out of the 23 students I talked to when putting this article together, only three of them told me that the sex education they received in school was useful to them.



BY BRIANNA PARKER  
STAFF WRITER

"I don't even remember having sex-ed in high school," said sophomore Dominic Greenaway. "They told us about men's and women's genitalia, but we never really talked about sex. I didn't feel like I needed sexual education because I had the Internet."

This reflects a deeply rooted problem with the way America's youth is taught about sexuality. The Internet is an important resource for many things, but sorting through what is good information and what is bogus can be difficult for adolescents who have not received proper education on the topic.

American media is saturated with messages about sex. Boys learn that, in order to be proper men, they need to get laid. All the while, girls are learning that they need to protect themselves against the evils of sexual intercourse, lest they become sluts.

With all the conflicting information out there, is it not the job of schools to do what they do best and educate their students about how to protect themselves against the potential negatives that sex brings while informing them of the potential positives of sexuality?

Of course it is. The main problem with sexual education in America is the limited scope of information provided to these young adults.

Abstinence-only education and sex education that only focuses on the negative consequences of sex will never be enough to prepare people for the whole range of sexual identities and sexual experiences that exist, let alone prepare people to make decisions about their bodies that they are comfortable with.

And let's talk about inclusivity for a second.

On Feb. 9, Fox News published an article claiming that students in a California high school were publicly shamed for not accepting the "LGBT agenda" that was being taught to them as part of their education on sexuality.

The students were visited in class by peers from the Queer Straight Alliance and given handouts with LGBT terminology. They were also asked to place themselves on a gender spectrum.

"They told the students one day they could come to school feeling like a boy and the next day they could come to school feeling like a girl," one parent told Fox.

Some parents, who identified themselves as Christian, claimed that parents should have been notified for permission before the students were taught about these topics.

The problem with asking parents for permission before teaching students about sexual identity is that those students who are not given permission are left woefully under-informed about issues that may very well affect them. Being Christian does not exclude one from being gay, transgender, gender-fluid, bisexual, asexual, etc.

The program taught at that California high school is actually a step in the right direction and is a program which should be more common in American schools.

What happens to these children who grow up in the dark about how to make informed decisions with their sexual encounters?

Withholding information about sex from adolescents is no way to protect them from the potential dangers of sexual activity. In fact, it does quite the opposite. If young adults do not even know how to use birth control, how to protect against STDs or the signs of healthy versus abusive relationships, this opens the door for much bigger problems.

Seven out of my 23 interviewees told me that they wish information about sex had been presented in a more positive light and that there should have been a greater emphasis on consent.

In a society in which girls are sent home from school for showing too much skin, inhibiting their ability to learn, a society in which young men are told they need to be sexually active or else they are flawed and a society in which young queer kids have their identities erased time and time again in hetero-centric media, a little positivity about sexuality is greatly needed.

"Abstinence-only education programs are not effective at delaying the initiation of sexual activity or reducing teen pregnancy," reports Advocates for Youth, a nonprofit dedicated to helping teenagers make informed decisions about their sexuality.

Let's face it — sex is never going away. Parents cannot just ignore the issue and hope that their children remain "pure." This is simply not how it works in the real world. Whether adolescents decide to have sex or not, informed and consensual decisions are paramount.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Core values should be reflected in salary equality

As a former full-time employee, a current adjunct faculty member at Guilford College and as a Quaker, I love the ethos at Guilford. It's a place founded on the belief that all people have the right to express their voices and can expect to be heard. It is a community where gifts and shortcomings alike can be brought to light to be examined and explored.

I believed this as a full-time employee, and I still believe it as an adjunct instructor. However, the ongoing issue of salary disparities between full-time faculty, adjunct faculty and professional staff members has been eschewed for many years. Had the issue been addressed fairly in years past, I would still be working full-time at Guilford.

After promised salary adjustments were tabled year after year and professional staff members received only two

small increases in the six years I worked full-time, I was forced to seek employment elsewhere. The salaries paid to my colleagues and I are not a living wage, and I could no longer "make do" as a full-time employee making a paltry salary and working the long hours my job demanded.

While my full-time job required a masters' degree, the time salary was equal to what I had earned at an entry-level job in decades past. People ask me why I even took the position in the first place. In my hiring process, I was told that salary adjustments, which included my own salary, would be implemented by the end of the fiscal year. I believed that promise. When the adjustments didn't happen, our supervisor made repeated pleas on our behalf to the school's administration, to no avail. She often apologized that her efforts had not proven successful.

Another reason that I took the full-time position at Guilford was that I truly believe in its core mission. It's the same reason I continue to teach there, despite the small paycheck that comes with being an adjunct instructor. Guilford College is a place where good can unfold in ways that wouldn't happen on many other college campuses across the U.S. And, although working full-time at Guilford left me financially depleted, I continue to trust that the salaries for adjunct faculty and professional staff members eventually will reflect the equality and integrity that is part of the College's well-promoted core values and that is foundational to the Quaker practice.

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