

# Earlier AIDS education in school urged

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ATLANTA — The high number of American teen-agers having risky sex is slowly dropping, and schools are increasing education about AIDS, federal health authorities reported yesterday.

There's no way to know how much of the drop in teen sex is because of school efforts. Still, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged schools to begin education about the virus that causes AIDS, in kindergarten and intensify it by the ninth grade.

AIDS "education can be most effective when it's integrated as part of a comprehensive kindergarten-

through-grade 12 health education program," said Dr. Lloyd Kolbe, the agency's director of adolescent and school health.

"It's just as important as science and math."

That doesn't mean discussing condoms with first-graders, Kolbe said.

"In the early grades it's important that young people start to understand that they can influence their own health," he said, advocating that courses gradually become more specific. "You don't come into the 12th grade and provide two days" of data on the human immunodeficiency virus "and expect that to be sufficient."

Nationwide, school systems and parents are grappling with how much children need to learn about AIDS and at what age. Hundreds of Georgia parents this month opposed a state proposal for AIDS education in elementary schools.

In New York City, the nation's largest school system, AIDS education begins with general discussion in kindergarten. Fourth-graders are taught how the virus is transmitted. Sixth graders are told of the risks of anal sex. The curriculum's effectiveness is still being evaluated.

"The debate will come down to where people draw the line to introducing lifestyles to young people who are unaware of them," said New York City school board member Michael Petrides, who succeeded in getting abstinence emphasized in the courses.