

# "THE FAILURE OF SEX EDUCATION"<sup>1</sup>

Reports Barbara Dafoe Whitehead in *The Atlantic Monthly* 12/8/96

- Modern sex education is not grounded in the hard sciences of medicine and biology as it was pre-1948. As former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Jocelyn Elders explained, sex education no longer provides children with just a "plumbing lesson."
- Whitehead reports that sex educators seek to build self esteem, prevent sexual abuse, promote acceptance for all kinds of families, helping little girls be more assertive and boys more nurturing. She explains that sex educators inform the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and sexology, providing a **philosophy, a pedagogy** of faith: if teenagers are given a formal body of sex knowledge and skills, along with the proper contraceptive technology, they will responsibly govern their sexual behavior.
- Whitehead says principals "buy a sex education curriculum and enroll the coach or home-economics teacher in a training workshop, and their school has a sex-education program" built on the basic tenets of "sex education orthodoxy" as follows:

**First: Sex Ed says children are "sexual from birth."**[rejecting any period] when children are sexually latent. "You are being sexual when you throw your arms around your grandpa and give him a hug."

**Second: Sex Ed says children have been sexually mis-educated by parents and church.**

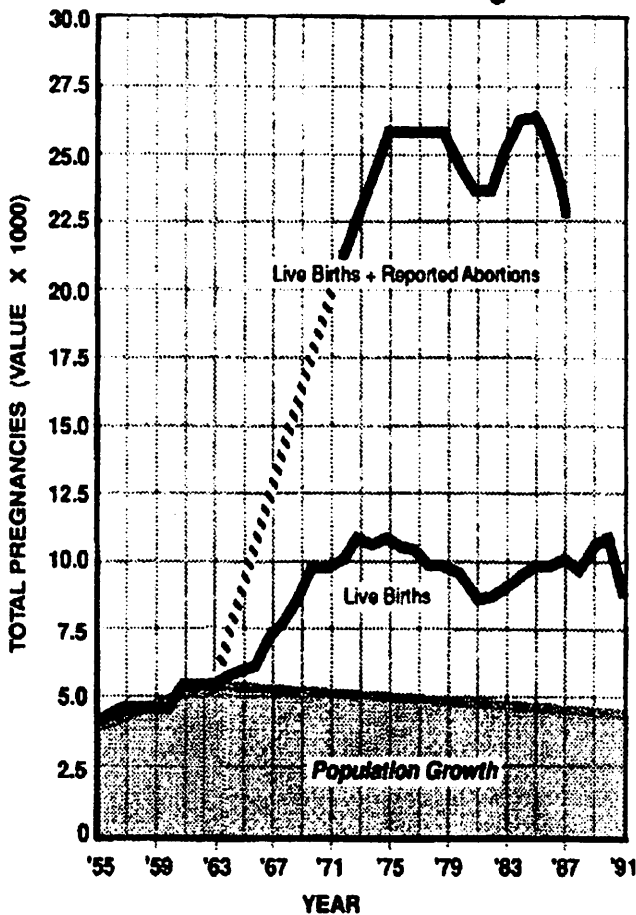
**Third: Sex Ed says sex education in the schools is the solution, if mis-education is the problem: then;**

**Fourth: Sex Ed says it must begin in the earliest grades.** Since children are sexual from birth, this is Sex Ed's most defining tenet. Like math or reading, comprehensive sex education takes a "building blocks approach." Sexual literacy in the first grade is acquiring basic sex vocabulary, starting with proper names for genitalia and progressing toward an understanding of masturbation, intercourse and conception.

Sex educators offered their approach as an alternative to what they saw as a failure to regulate teenage sexuality through social and religious values. Thus sex education stands or falls on the proven effectiveness of its techniques.

Table 1 skyrocketing "Pregnancies Among Unwed Girls 15-19" *verifies* that, in the early 50s while "family life" instruction was the responsibility of parents, teen pregnancy was low, but following on the heels of school sex education, teenagers' overwhelmingly made decisions to "engage" in sex despite access to birth control and abortion.

**Pregnancies Among Unwed Girls Under 15 Years of Age**

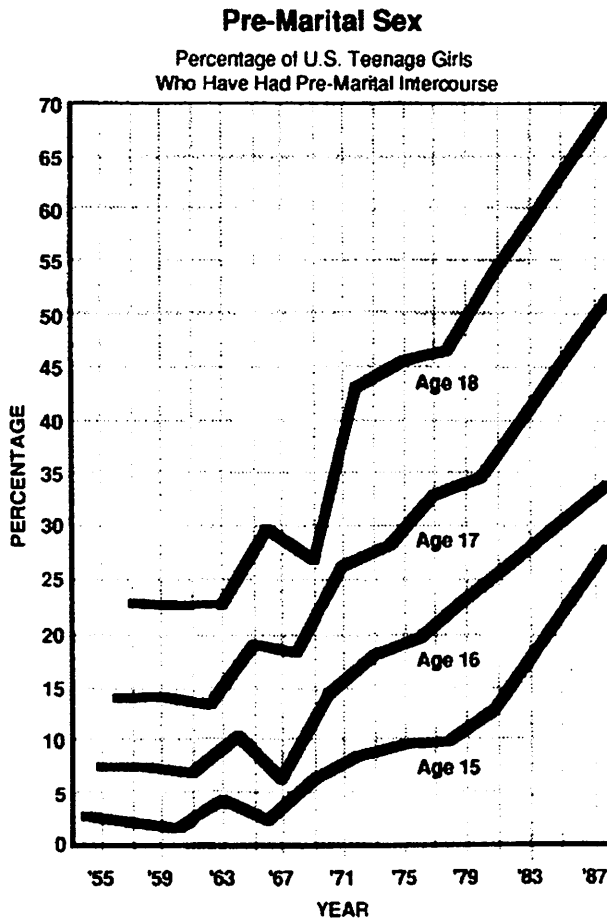


Indicates population growth.  
Indicates interpolated data.

Basic data from Department of Health and Human Services

While Whitehead details the "sex education orthodoxy," we compare sex education goals to the hard data which report toxic increases in teenage sexual disease and dysfunctions:

<sup>1</sup> October 1994. The summary of Ms. Whitehead's article is augmented here by Tables taken from *RSVP America* (1996). References to Kinsey's findings (page 4) are drawn from the work of Dr. Judith Reisman with permission.



Basic data from *Family Planning Perspectives*, March/April 1987, and from *Sexual and Reproductive Behavior of American Women, 1982-88* Furnished by the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

- **Sex educators have faith in the power of “Knowledge” to change sexual behavior.**

Whitehead reports that Douglas Kirby, of ETR Associates, a Planned Parenthood associate, conducted a major study on the effectiveness of sex education programs for the Health Education & Welfare and Centers for Disease Control. Kirby claimed that despite billions invested, “As it is typically taught sex ed has little effect on teenagers’ decisions to engage or postpone sex.....[or to] significantly reduce teenage pregnancy.” However, the hard data reveal a very different story than Kirby’s assessment.

- **Sex educators assume knowledge acquired at early ages will influence sexual behavior.**

Whitehead notes a Planned Parenthood conclusion that a “knowledgeable thirteen-year-old is no more likely to use a contraceptive than an uninformed thirteen-year-old.”

**Table 2, skyrocketing “Pre-Marital Sex” among “Teenage Girls” verifies that while parents still controlled sexual information rates of pre-marital sex were low. Now that schools teach sex “knowledge” teen contraceptive use has not increased although teen sexual activity has increased dramatically.**

- **Sex educators assume sex knowledge promotes good communication.**

Whitehead reports parental *discipline and supervision are more important than* communication. Based on teenagers’ self-reports, *diminished parental supervision strongly correlates with early sexual activity*. Says Whitehead, better communication about sex does not contribute to a higher level of sexual responsibility. If free and easy sex talk contributed to responsible sexual behavior the statistical trends in **Table 2** would reflect that fact. Our tongue-tied, “repressed” grandparents had much lower rates of illegitimacy and STDs than today’s franker and looser lipped youth.

- **Sex educators advise students that “Outercourse” is an alternative to “Intercourse.”**

Whitehead finds no evidence that teaching what sex educators call “outercourse,” (non-coital sex), that is masturbation, oral sodomy, etc., reduces coital sex. Cross-culturally and historically “outercourse” (or foreplay or petting) is a trigger for intercourse. Teaching it otherwise, seems to Whitehead to come close to educational malpractice.