

Draw the Line/Respect the Line

Overview

Draw the Line/Respect the Line is a three-year, school-based sex education program for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. It was evaluated in three school districts in urban Northern California between 1997 and 1999. This program was primarily designed to help young adolescents postpone having sex. Increasing condom use was a secondary goal. The program uses a 19-session curriculum that teaches youth how to establish and maintain limits regarding sexual behavior.

Results from an experimental evaluation showed that at the 36-month follow-up at the end of ninth grade, males (but not females) in the program were less likely than those in the control group to report ever having sex, or to have had sexual intercourse within the past year. There were no significant changes in condom use among males or females.

Three curriculum guides are available for purchase – one each for grades six, seven, and eight. They can be purchased individually for \$21 or as a set for \$56.

Insights After the Fact

Key Challenges

The program was designed to be taught over multiple years (grades 6, 7 and 8). Some schools may face challenges running it through multiple grades due to other time demands.

Some communities may be less comfortable with the curriculum for the older teens because it includes more explicit information on STDs and other sensitive issues. Some communities may feel this content is not appropriate at the middle school level.

Lessons Learned

The program seems to work best when sessions are held at least twice a week.

The evaluation found Draw the Line/Respect the Line had limited impacts on girls. An important predictor of whether or not a girl has sex is related to the age of her partner. The program does not focus on how to set limits with an older partner.

It is very important that facilitators be trained and comfortable with the program content. Using outside educators made delivering the program less burdensome for the classroom teacher; however, training classroom teachers increases the likelihood that the program will be continued.

Source: Dr. Karin Coyle, Co-principal investigator, ETR Associates

Program Description

Draw the Line/Respect the Line is a three-year classroom-based program that was evaluated in three school districts in urban Northern California between 1997 and 1999. It serves children in grades six through eight. Using group discussions, small group activities, and role playing, the program aims to delay the initiation of sex in order to reduce the incidence of STDs, including HIV/AIDS, and pregnancy.

Population Served and Setting

Draw the Line/Respect the Line serves youth in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and was designed to be used in a classroom setting. The program can also be used in a community organization setting.

Goals

The program seeks to encourage middle school-aged youth to delay having sexual intercourse. This abstinence-focused program also focuses on developing teens' interpersonal and

intrapersonal skills so that they can set sexual limits. Among sexually experienced teens, the program focuses on reducing sexual activity and encouraging condom use.

Type of Intervention

Draw the Line/Respect the Line includes 19 classroom sessions that can be given during a standard 45-50 minute classroom period. During the first year, sixth grade students participate in five lessons focused on using refusal skills in non-sexual situations. In the second year, seventh grade students have seven lessons that address setting sexual limits, understanding the consequences of unplanned sex, handling pressures regarding sexual intercourse, and practicing refusal skills. In the final year, eighth grade students receive seven lessons on practicing refusal and interpersonal skills and participating in activities regarding HIV/STD education.

The program uses social cognitive theory and social inoculation theory based on the assumption that knowledge and constant skill practice can influence sexual risk-taking behaviors.

Main Messages

The primary message conveyed through Draw the Line/Respect the Line is that postponing sexual activity during adolescence is the healthiest choice. Program sessions encourage participants to discuss social and peer pressures to have sex, to set limits, to abstain from sexual intercourse, and to stay clear of risky situations. Draw the Line/Respect the Line also provides information on HIV, other STDs, and pregnancy prevention, as well as correct condom use.

Operation/Logistics

Length of program: Youth received 19 classroom-based sessions, each of which last 45-60 minutes. Year One (sixth grade) consisted of five classroom sessions; Year Two (seventh grade) and Year Three (eighth grade) each consisted of seven classroom sessions. *Size of program:* The evaluated program in northern California took place in 19 middle schools in three school districts. A total of 2,829 sixth graders were tracked over the three years.

Components of intervention: A variety of interactive teaching methods are used, including group discussions, role-playing, stories, and games. The program materials are designed to provide information in a format that is interesting and engaging.

Staffing requirements: Program leaders should be experienced health educators who receive training on how to conduct Draw the Line/Respect the Line and administer session activities. *Curriculum:* Each of the three manuals (one for each grade level) begins with an introduction describing the importance of the program, an overview of the curriculum, and a description of the underlying principles that guided the program's development. Information is also provided for facilitators on how to use the manual and teach the sessions. The curriculum is available in English and Spanish.

Curriculum

The sixth grade curriculum includes the following:

- **Session 1** introduces the concept of what it means to "draw the line." Activities encourage youth to personalize this concept.
- **Session 2** builds on session 1. Participants identify strategies for communicating their message.
- **Session 3** builds on the previous sessions by having participants engage in role playing and communicate where they draw the line.
- **Session 4** highlights how to handle high-pressure situations and use effective communication skills.

- **Session 5** discusses the role that friends play in respecting the line. Role play scenarios are used to practice showing respect for another person's limits.

The seventh grade curriculum includes the following:

- **Session 1** is an overview of what students have already learned about "drawing the line" and provides an overview of the seventh grade program. Activities focus on what makes it difficult to "draw the line" when placed in high-pressure situations.
- **Session 2** focuses on the consequences of having sex.
- **Session 3** helps students identify ways to handle risky situations. Activities encourage students to become aware of situations that could lead to sex.
- **Session 4** uses role-playing exercises to focus on "drawing the line" in risky sexual situations.
- **Session 5** provides information on STDs, their symptoms, and ways to avoid transmission. Students learn that abstinence is the most effective method for preventing STDs and unwanted pregnancy. This session also emphasizes that students who do choose to have sex, must always use a condom to reduce the risk of contracting an STD.
- **Session 6** addresses sexual pressure. Activities include a mock talk show and role playing to practice assisting friends in resisting sexual pressure.
- **Session 7** has students participate in activities that review key steps for drawing the line and respecting the line.

The eighth grade curriculum includes the following:

- **Session 1** has students read and discuss a true story by a young woman with HIV about how her life has been affected. Students also create their own version of the Draw the Line logo based on their own lives.
- **Session 2** provides information on how to prevent the spread of HIV and other STDs through a game show format. It emphasizes that abstaining from sex, for virgins and non-virgins alike, is the most effective way to prevent HIV and other STDs.
- **Session 3** discusses the challenges of sticking with personal limits.
- **Session 4** allows students to practice upholding their limits using role playing exercises.
- **Session 5** has a guest speaker share his or her experiences living with HIV/AIDS.
- **Session 6** discusses how to reduce the risk of HIV, STDs, and pregnancy. Students learn how to properly use condoms.
- **Session 7** closes out the program by asking students to identify things that can help them maintain their limits.

Evaluation

Type

Draw the Line/Respect the Line was evaluated using an experimental random-assignment design. Nineteen public middle schools from three urban school districts in Northern California were randomly assigned to either the Draw the Line/Respect the Line program or to the control group. The evaluation included 2,829 participants and control group members. The

evaluation study was completed between spring 1997 and spring 1999. Students in 10 intervention schools received the Draw the Line/Respect the Line program and students in nine control-group schools received their school's regular HIV/sex education curriculum. Between 87 and 90 percent of students completed the follow-up questionnaires.

Population

The Draw the Line/Respect the Line program evaluation included youth in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Participants' average age was 12. Program participants were 59 percent Latino, 17 percent White, and 16 percent Asian. Half of the participants were male and half were female. Five percent of program participants were sexually experienced prior to the intervention.

Components

Instruments and Frequency: Self-report surveys in English and Spanish were administered annually. The baseline survey was given in the sixth grade, and follow-up surveys were administered in the seventh grade (at 12-months) with a 91 percent retention rate, the eighth grade (at 24-months) with an 88 percent retention rate, and the ninth grade (at 36-months) with a 64 percent retention rate.

Outcomes measured: Participants were asked about a number of behaviors for the past twelve months: Sexual activity (including ever had sex), frequency of sexual intercourse, number of sexual partners, "coercive behaviors", and "unwanted sexual advances" were measured at baseline and at all three follow-up points. Other outcomes measured included condom-related knowledge, attitudes toward abstaining from sex, perceptions of peer norms supporting sex, setting sexual limits, and avoiding potentially risky sexual situations.

Findings

Prior to the intervention, 5 percent of students in the experimental group were sexually experienced, compared to 4 percent of control group students.

Sexual experience: Evaluation results from the 36-month follow-up show that Draw the Line/Respect the Line had a positive impact on delayed sexual initiation among males, but not among females. Specifically, 19 percent of males in the program had ever had sex compared with 27 percent of males in the control group.

Other outcomes: At the 36 month follow-up, male participants were less likely than males in the control group to have had sexual intercourse in the past year (17 percent vs. 25 percent). In addition, male program participants reported lower frequency of recent sexual activity and fewer recent sexual partners than males in the control group, at the 24-month follow-up, but these impacts diminished by the 36-month follow-up. There were no significant impacts on recent sexual activity, frequency of sexual activity, or number of partners among female program participants. There were no program impacts on condom use among males or females.

Contact Information and Resources

The evaluators hypothesize that the lack of significant impacts among females may be due to the influence of older sexual partners on females and the possibility that females require more practice and support resisting coercion than males (Coyle, et al, 2004). They also posit that the positive impacts on males could be due to fostering school norms that support abstinence among males. The lack of effects on condom use at last sex for both males and females may be due to the small number of study participants who had recent sex.

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Resources

Coyle, K. K., Kirby, D. B., Marin, B. V., Gomez, C. A., & Gregorich, S. E. (2004). Draw the Line/Respect the Line: A randomized trial of a middle school intervention to reduce sexual risk behaviors. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94:5, 843-851. Coyle, K., Marin, B., Gardner, C., Cummings, J., Gomez, C., & Kirby, D. (2003) Draw the Line/Respect the Line: Setting limits to prevent HIV, STD, and pregnancy, grade 7. ETR Associates: Scotts Valley, CA.

Coyle, K.K., Kirby, D., Marin, B., Gomez, C., & Gregorich, S. (2000). Effect of Draw the Line/Respect the Line on sexual behavior in middle schools. Santa Cruz: ETR Associates. Unpublished Manuscript.

Marin, B., Coyle, K., Cummings, J., Gardner, C., Gomez, C., & Kirby, D. (2003). Draw the Line/Respect the Line: Setting limits to prevent HIV, STD, and pregnancy, grade 8. ETR Associates: Scotts Valley, CA.

Marin, B., Coyle, K., Gomez, C., Jinich, S., & Kirby, D. (2003). Draw the Line/Respect the Line: Setting limits to prevent HIV, STD, and pregnancy, grade 6. ETR Associates: Scotts Valley, CA.