

Alcohol: Friend or Foe of Teenage Pregnancy

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Overview

This unit is about teenage pregnancy and one possible reason for this situation. The reason in this unit is the teenage use of alcohol which can affect a teenagers' decision about whether to have sex or not and whether to use a condom or not. When a teenager becomes pregnant, the pregnancy affects the teenager's immediate life and future prospects. Teenagers are interested in reproduction. They are fascinated by the chapters in any biology book or anatomy book on the reproductive system, and how babies develop. The females enjoy the pictures showing the different stages of the pregnancy. The males are interested in the male and female anatomy. If students were given a choice of what system they would research, many pick the reproductive system. This unit should interest students for some of the reasons stated previously. This curriculum spans a period of 12 weeks. It gives the student ample time to do research and use the internet. It can be used as a supplement to anatomy, biology 2 or as term projects.

Rationale

There are several studies that give reasons and statistics for why a unit on teenage pregnancy and alcohol use is needed in the school curriculum today. Some of these studies are listed here. In "Concerned Women for America", Janice Shaw Crouse stated that it was obvious that drinking often fueled casual sexual experimentation.¹ Her views correspond to an earlier article in 1989 by Janine Bempedet. Alcohol abuse can be attributed to several factors in teenagers. It can be linked to family factors, antisocial behavior, school and peer factors. It can also be associated with individual traits such as attitudes, beliefs and personality or it can be used as a way to handle stress. Any of these factors can lead teenagers to become involved in situations governed by poor decisions. One of these is teenage pregnancy. It affects the teenager, her family and those close to her. Society becomes involved because the child is too young to be on her own and the care of her infant is absorbed by the public. The trend of young mothers to give birth and to keep their child has caused teen pregnancy to become a national epidemic.²

The previous articles contradict the information given in another study published in 1999 which compared the trends of teenage pregnancy between 1982 and 1995. The authors stated that the rates of teenage pregnancy have been decreasing since 1990. Three-quarters of teenage pregnancies are unintended and one quarter end in abortion. In 15-17 year olds, the peak was 1991 and then teenage pregnancies dropped by 17% by 1996.³ Similar statistics show that sexual activity has dropped 7% between 1991 and 2005. Even with this drop, three out of 10 teenagers become pregnant before age 20. There are more than 750,000 pregnancies among teens each year in the United States. Eight out of 10 pregnancies are not planned and 81% of the teens are not married. Between 1990 and 2002 pregnancies between 15-19 year olds decreased 36%. Even with these declines the United States still leads the western industrialized countries in teen pregnancies.⁴

There seems to be a lot of data that disagrees but there is a constant thread throughout the research that the use of alcohol and teenage pregnancy are related. Teenagers may use alcohol for many reasons. Some of these are that their friends are drinking and they want to fit in with them. It makes them feel good initially or makes them feel more grown up when they drink. Unfortunately one of the effects of drinking is that they can become more easily influenced and may do things that they would not normally do. This often leads to unwanted or unplanned sex, which can then lead to pregnancy when a condom is not used because alcohol impairs judgment.⁵

There were several sources that stated that alcohol use and teenage pregnancy can be approached in different ways. As reported by Huliq: Breaking News, the British Medical Journal stated that the school should improve their ethos or institutional culture. A survey was done to see if there were ways to reduce teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse. This survey was done in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Scotland's survey indicated that school size and school ethos contributed to alcohol abuse. Bigger schools and poor ethos were the cause. In Australia and the United States projects that dealt with several areas of misuse improved health behavior. Activities included improved communication between teachers and students, increased involvement of students and their parents in policies dealing with the schools and more professional development for teachers dealing with these issues. Where these changes occurred, these studies showed that there was an improvement in school ethos. In the United States there was a 34% decrease in the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana among boys and a decline in unprotected sex, sexual frequency, violence and truancy. The females showed no improvement.⁶

Teenage alcohol use and pregnancy is a problem in the United States as stated above. Here are some facts about the affect of alcohol and its affect on pregnancy. Alcohol is a depressant and it can lead to general arousal. Its initial affects make an individual feel good but as drinking continues it decreases inhibitions. A young virgin may become loud and promiscuous. The central nervous system is affected by numbing the part of the brain that control's a person's behavior. The person feels more comfortable and relaxed and their controlled behavior changes. He or she may than say or do things that he or she would not normally do. Teenagers often will forget to use a condom they are doing

something that they would not necessarily do if they were not drinking. These two factors can lead to pregnancy. When asked later, young people often will say that they had not meant for things to turn out the way they did. They were not thinking and were taking the risks of unprotected sex because they were drinking.⁷ Even though these media blips deal with other drugs beside alcohol, they can still be used as a model to help guide young people away from alcohol since it is also a drug.

There is a lot happening in the world today but the responsibility of taking care of oneself still applies regardless of age. Schools have limited access today to NTAs or Non-teacher assistants. They were from the community and knew the students and their parents. There are fewer counselors, and psychologists are often shared between schools. Students need to feel that they have options. In class discussions teenage females who are or were pregnant often mention that they did not have all the information that they needed to make positive decisions. When they became pregnant, it affected their families, their education and their future prospects in jobs. Youth is when life is to be learned, experienced and enjoyed. Drug, alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy limit choices and interrupt the lessons being learned. Often there is more of an impact on the teenage female than the male but there is still an emotional connection. With increased awareness and more available information in the schools at an earlier age, maybe students will be helped in dealing with the pressures that seem to follow them today. Health education classes need to be increased rather than decreased. Science needs to deal with these issues as well in all grades. There is so much happening in a young person's life that a little more education with a positive push might be the answer to many issues today.

Relation to Public Health

Public health covers a wide area of concerns. It can deal with a small group of people or continents. There are also smaller categories that can make up public health such as epidemiology, biostatistics and health services. Important fields can include the effects that the environment, Society, behavior and occupations can affect what happens to groups of people.⁸ Due to experimentation, use and abuse of drinking alcohol among teenagers, alcohol use has become a public health issue. It impairs the thinking process and can lead to unprotected sex which can lead to pregnancy in teenagers. Now teenage pregnancy becomes a public health issue as well. Due to these behaviors stated here, teenage alcohol use and pregnancy concerns the community, the teenagers involved both male and female, their parents; their friends and their schools.

The two areas that this curriculum unit covers are some laws and resources available to teenagers who get into trouble due to pregnancy and/or alcohol use. Though public health interventions can be used to promote healthy behavior, it takes the efforts of society to stop something from happening before it happens. There are many state laws which protect the rights of teenagers. Today all states have statutory rape laws. Many states give the teenager the right to have an abortion. The decision was determined by the court case of *Roe v Wade* in 1973. It was determined that females should have the right to choose whether or not to give birth. If an abortion is desired, it can be based on whether the fetus is viable. When the fetus is over 24 weeks of age, abortion may be

available if the female's health is concerned.⁹ Today the controversy of pro-life is still a hot political issue. In 1992, this initial decision was reaffirmed in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*. The "right to have an abortion" was upheld.¹⁰ Since then there have been several changes. The Welfare Reform changed in 1996 and out-of-wedlock- births were high on the list of problems that had to be reduced. In 2002, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reform Act were reauthorized. Additional funds were made available to deal with teenage pregnancy. Even with all these changes, it still costs more than \$7 billion a year or \$3200 per teenage birth each year.¹¹ This cost is absorbed by the United States public.

The other area concerned with public health beside the law is resources that are available to teenagers. One of these is Planned Parenthood. They do not discriminate by age or marital status. Planned Parenthood may be especially helpful to teenagers who do not want to go to their parents for advice about condom use, sex or drug use. Another resource available is the media. There are many commercials that deal with many of these sensitive issues. During one of these, the parents each take the role of the adult and their teenager and act out the various behavior and questions that might occur before they approach their child. Another is about finding marijuana in the bedroom and how to address this issue. A third is about how you answer the questions about parental use of drugs when the parent was younger. A radio commercial for a restaurant coupled the mother's and her son's food choices with how they would address each other about various issues in the teenager's life. Even though these media blips deal with other drugs and issues beside alcohol and pregnancy, they can still be used as a model to help guide young people away from alcohol. These commercials and research are showing that the media is trying to educate and get the word out that the use of alcohol and inappropriate behavior is not acceptable. They want to reach as many of the young people as they can. Finally the research again showed that there are many different factors that can affect teenage pregnancy. The San Antonio website stated that teenage pregnancy has many causes and that there is no single cure. It is a problem for both boys and girls. Different risk factors noted were the living arrangement in a disadvantaged environment, the effects of sexual abuse, race and ethnicity, peer influence, emotional distress, core family size, and finally, substance abuse. They mentioned some measures that can be taken to eliminate the above risks. These included the influence of the school and the teenager's involvement, the connection felt between the parents and the school, communication between parents and their teenagers, participation in religious events and activities, "higher income and education" and the disapproval of parents about teen sex.¹²

Strategies

This unit can be used for an anatomy course, biology 2 course or in health. There are many problems that our young people face today. The unit on teenage pregnancy and alcohol use will help to educate the young about the problems that can occur as well as some of the resources available to help if they find that they are in a situation where they are not sure what to do. Initially they will engage in KWL which stands for what do you know, what you want to know and what have you learned. The students will engage in internet research as well as analyze various articles and discuss them among themselves.

Their writing skills will be incorporated since they will be writing about what they discussed and read. They also will have a chance to create a short play based on different scenarios. Different experts in the community will be invited into the classroom who can guide young people along the right or more preferable path. These include health care personal and social workers.

Objectives

Schools, the media, and the community need to do a better job educating teens about the relationship between alcohol use and sex that may lead to teenage pregnancy. One way is through education. Students will have an opportunity to learn about two of the concerns that face teenagers today. Thus curriculum will give them a chance to view current information to give them a broader understanding and background. They will have a chance to brainstorm, discuss, share ideas, share experiences, take surveys and write about these concerns. One of the major objectives in today's education is to find ways that science can relate to their everyday life and about what concerns them the most.

Classrooms Activities

This proposed unit is for a twelfth grade course in science about anatomy. It meets for a block period and lasts two report periods. Anatomy counts as one science credit. It is a mandated course for students going into nursing or the medical field. The topics will take place over several weeks so that students will have a chance to view and collect articles from the internet. Every Friday have students turn in their assignments. Give time during the week for students to work cooperatively in pairs or in groups of three or four. Teachers can either allow them to chose their own groups or choose them for them.

Lesson One

Objective: To introduce social problems that relate to their lives today

Activities: Group the students into cooperative groups of 4. Each group will brainstorm for about five minutes about the following question. What are some of the serious problems that face young people today?

One person in the group will write down everything that the group can think of between them. They will choose one and a different student will write it on the large chart paper provided and display it. Each group will go around and read the different statements and write do their comments or responses to each statement. Each group will appoint a spokes person who will discuss what was written and some of the comments included. Each student will turn in on Friday a KWL chart about the main problems that were discussed.

Lesson Two

Objective: To introduce the topics of teenage alcohol use and its effects on teenage pregnancy. To give the students access to current internet research about these topics.

Activities: Teachers will have the students break up into different groups of three today. Each group will choose one of the articles provided. Each group will divide their article up so that each person has a part of the article. Students will read their part and share it with each other. They will then choose one in their group to share a few sentences with the class about the article. Each group will turn in a short essay about their article.

By the following Friday each student will go online and get a free subscription for 30 days from “Teen Health and Wellness.” This is a publication for teenagers. Each student will choose either an article on alcohol use or teen pregnancy. They will then read it, print it, write an essay about it and be prepared to introduce it to the class that following Friday.

Lesson Three

Objective: To introduce the teenage alcohol use and options for teenage pregnancy.

Activities: These activities are taken from a lesson plan called “I’m Pregnant, Now What?” There are several activities that are suggested to help understand options when pregnant. The teacher breaks the group into two smaller groups and has each group take a short true/false test. The groups rejoin and the teacher goes over the answers with the class and they discuss them. The second part deals with “Challenges and Rewards”. New groups are formed. The lists provided are discussed. Finally they are introduced to IDEAL which is a model to solve problems. I stands for “identify the problem. D is to “describe all possible solutions”. E is used to “evaluate the consequences of each solution”. A is about the ability to “choose a solution and actualize it” and finally L is to “learn-think about the solution.” Finally the students will take the short alcohol facts/myths quiz with the answers and then without the answers. This lasts from 85-120 minutes and should be spread out over a few weeks. The students will write a short essay about how they felt before they took the tests and after the tests. They will turn in a KWL chart about pregnancy and one for alcohol. They will make up a Venn diagram for the relationship between teen drinking and pregnancy. The directions and text material are in the appendix.¹³

Lesson Four

Objective: To read and discuss an article written by a teenage mother to be. To read about how a young pregnant teenager feels about how others view her and her situation.

Activities: The class will read the story orally together. Students will break up into pairs and discuss the following questions: Do you think that she was justified to feel uncomfortable? How does her scenario differ from a teenager who is pregnant in high school?

This article is in the appendix.¹⁴

Lesson Five

Objective: To bring in a professional social worker to talk to the class about alcohol and teenage pregnancy.

Activities: Ahead of time have the students prepare a few questions that they may want to ask the social worker. Ask the students to take notes and to collect any pamphlets.

Turn in on Friday a short essay about whether your opinion about teenage alcohol use and pregnancy has changed or stayed the same.

Lesson Six and Seven

Objective: To bring in a police detective to discuss teenage alcohol use and the possible results. To bring in a social worker and/or a health care professional to discuss teenage pregnancy and problems that may arise.

Activities: The teacher will have the students prepare a few questions to ask. They will take notes and collect pamphlets.

On Friday each student will turn in a short essay about the presentations. They will do a KWL chart about the information given during the presentations.

Lesson Eight

Objective: To have student's free write about the two presenters.

To have students organize their ideas and correctly write them down on paper.

Activities: The teacher will students to free write about their feelings, impressions and information about what was presented. Each topic should be 1-2 pages.

Lesson Nine

Objective: To increase people skills and get other opinions.

Activities: Each student will be asked to make up five to ten questions about teenage alcoholism and pregnancy. They will interview another teacher, a teenage mother and father and another adult using their questions. They will write down any responses given. They will summarize and chart the answers to see if there are any similarities.

Lesson Ten

Objective: To allow the students to use their imagination after covering these two teenage problems

Activities: Teacher will ask the students to work in groups of two. The groups will either be two females or two males

Each pair will write two 2-4 page plays. A female pair will write about two to four people going to a party, drinking alcohol and someone gets pregnant .A male pair will write about drinking and taking part in unprotected sex. The students need to be told to include the scene and to introduce the characters. Any narrative included will be in parenthesis.

For the second play each pair will write about the female or male response when two weeks later the main character finds out that she is pregnant or he is the father.

The plays will be exchanged and choose two or three of them will be acted out in the classroom. The students' chairs should be arranged in a circle.

Lesson Twelve

Objective: To allow the student to put their new knowledge into a short paper and presentation. To help students with their writing and presentation skills.

Activity: Students will write a five page paper about what they have covered about teenage pregnancy and alcohol. They will need a cover page, five pages of text and a bibliography. Each paper is placed in a binder. They can use any of the information that was provided and search the internet for new information. Note cards are made up before the paper is turned in and presentations should be two to three minutes.

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Associated Press, "Abstinence-Only Programs Don't Work, Study Finds", "Education Week", April 13, 2007.

This article is for reading only.

Bempechat, Janine, "Teenage Pregnancy and Drug Abuse: Sources of Problem Behaviors...", ERIC/CUE Digest No. 58, Eric Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, 1998-00-00

Bethany Torode, "Confession of a Teenage Mom," "Boundless Magazine", April 19, 2001. This article is about a teenage mother and her thoughts and feelings.

City of SA, Metro Health Department. "What causes Teen Pregnancy?", Official website of the city of San Antonio Health.

This cites many of the risk factors that have shown up in recent years dealing with teenage alcoholism and pregnancy.

P. J. Huffstutter, "States giving up sex-class funding", Philadelphia Inquirer, April 9, 2007.

The article is about how there are too many restrictions on the money that is available for sex education classes about abstinence.

Edited by Bill Seitz, "Teenage Pregnancy", Teenage Pregnancy. (WebSeitz/wikilog), Dec. 3, 2005.

The article gives several web links that you can go to for statistics and comments about teen problems and their consequences.

“I’m Pregnant, Now What” Lesson Plans. Author is not given but the entire lesson plan is at the web site listed below. There are a few sites listed for the goals, rational and material. This gives a series of activities as well as different discussion questions and extensions.

<http://www.teenwire.com/education/activity-016.pdf>

SADD Statistics updated February, 2007, Students Against Destructive Decisions Website

Sawhill, Isabel, “What can be done to reduce Teen Pregnancy and Out-of-Wedlock Births 2001”, The Brookings Institute.

It deals with alternatives and programs that are available.

You need to seek out other sources of information about the relationship between alcohol and teenage pregnancy.

Annotated Bibliography for Students

www.teenwire.com/education

It gives the students a place to go so that they can view basics about morality and current teenage thoughts.

SADD, Statistics Updated, February, 2007

It gives teenage pregnancy statistics.

“Teen Health and Wellness”, click on alcohol:

“Alcohol and Binge Drinking”

Click on Teen Pregnancy:

“Teen Pregnancy: get the Facts”

“Teen Pregnancy Myths and Facts”

“Thinking Things Through”

This is a teen magazine and the students should enjoy reading the different articles written by teens themselves.

Westside Pregnancy Resource Center.

It gives current statistics and other information about the relationship between teenage drinking alcohol and pregnancy.

Resources

<http://www.teenwire.com/ask/2005/as-20050504p1021-pregnant.php>

Copies of the questions for “I’m Pregnant, Now What” test questions with and without the answers and Pregnancy Options chart.

Reference List

1. Crouse, Janice Shaw, "In Praise of Virginity", "Concerned Women for America", Monday, February 19, 2007.
2. Bempechat, Janine, "Teenage Pregnancy and Drug Abuse: Sources of Public Behavior", ERIC/Cue Digest, No. 58, Eric Clearinghouse on Urban Education, New York, N Y, 1989-00-00
3. Darroch, Jacqueline and Singh, Susheela, "Why is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use", Guttmacher Institute, Occasional Report, No. 1, December, 1999.
4. SADD, Statistics updated February, 2007, Students Against Destructive Decisions.
5. Teen Health and Wellness, Rosen Publishing on line, "Teen Pregnancy: Get the Facts."
6. Submitted by harminka on Fri., 2007-03-23. copy to Huliq.com 2006 Write Your News and Inform the Public, "Reducing Substance Abuse and Teenage Pregnancy Through School Ethos".
7. Psychology and Human Problems, Lee Sechrest, John Wallace, 1967, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Columbus, Ohio
8. "Public Health", wikipedia, free encyclopedia
9. "Roe v Wade". wikipedia. free encyclopedia
10. "Planned Parenthood vs. Casey", wikipedia. Free encyclopedia
11. Sawhill, Isabel, "What can be done to reduce Teen Pregnancy and Out-of-Wedlock Births 2001", Brookings Institute
12. City of San Antonio, Metro Health Department, Official Website of the City of San Antonio Health
13. <http://www.teenwire.com/education/activity-016.pdf>
14. Bethany Torode, "Confessions of a Teenage Mom", "Boundless Magazine", April 19, 2001.

Appendices

This unit aligns with several Philadelphia Standards and Pennsylvania Standards

Grade Ten Biology

3.1 Pennsylvania State Standard Unifying Themes of Science

Ties in several of the concepts that unit science and technology.

3.2 Pennsylvania State Standard Inquiry and Design

It helps the students ask question and come up with solutions for problems.

3.6C Technology Education

Analyze physical technologies of structural design, analysis and engineering, Personnel relations, financial affairs, structural production, marketing, research, And design to real-world problems.

3.8 Science, Technology and Human Endeavors

B. Apply the use of ingenuity and technological resources to solve specific societal Needs and improve the quality of life.

3.3 Biological Sciences

¹ Concerned Women for America-In Praise of Virginity, Janice Shaw Crouse

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³ www.guttmacher.org/ppubs/or_teen_preg_decline.html

⁴ www.Sadd.org/Stats.htm.

⁵ <http://www.teenhealthandwellness.com/article/36>

⁶ <http://www.hliq.com/16158/reducing-substance-abuse-and-teenage-pregnancy-through-improving-school-ethos>

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¹¹ www.brookings.edu/es/research/projects/web/publications/pb/phc8.htm

¹² <http://www.sanantonio.gov/projectworth/causes.asp?res=1280ver=true>

¹³ http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_teen_sex.html #22

¹⁴ www.boundless.org/2000/features/10000422.html