

HIV/STI and Sex Education in Michigan Schools

Guidelines for Using Guest Speakers

School districts are encouraged to consider the pros and cons of using guest speakers in the classroom for HIV/STI and sex education.

Guest speakers may enhance student learning by providing a different and engaging voice, specific content expertise, and/or linkages to external programs and services. Conversely, guest speakers may pose issues by: 1) straying from the boundaries provided by the district; and/or 2) delivering instruction that is fear-based, developmentally inappropriate, medically inaccurate, and/or not evidence-based. Guest speakers may elicit more discussion, because students don't know them and might be more inclined to ask them questions. However, they may lack the trust and rapport which classroom teachers have built with students.

Ideally, the classroom teacher will possess the knowledge and skills to implement the approved curriculum with comfort and skill, and not rely on guest presenters to instruct on topics they are unprepared to teach or are uncomfortable teaching. A program that depends upon outside speakers is generally unsustainable over time.

Note that guest presenters cannot teach 50% or more of the health education course. A majority of the course must be taught by a certified teacher who holds an endorsement which permits the teacher to teach health (MA, MX, KH), including sex education.

Below are some tips for the classroom teacher to consider.

Deciding Whether to Invite a Guest Speaker

- Will a guest speaker share an expertise on the topics to be covered during the presentation that the classroom teacher cannot provide?
- Will the student learning outcomes be met more effectively by having a guest speaker than by having the classroom teacher deliver the instruction?
- Do the speaker's credentials (e.g., degrees, certification, training, prior experience, references, etc.) include the following?
 - Recommendation by a reputable source.
 - Expertise and training related to the topic of the presentation.
 - A history of respectful working relationships with the school district.
 - A flexible, engaging manner, that is developmentally appropriate, responsive to requests and feedback, and respectful of state laws and local policies.
- Does the organization's mission statement or goals align with the district's program philosophy, goals, and objectives for HIV/STI and sex education?

Before the Presentation

- Ensure that guest speaker is familiar with relevant state laws governing both HIV/STI education and sex education in Michigan schools (§380.1169, §380.1506, §380.1507, §380.1507, §380.1507a, §380.1507b, §388.1766, §388.1766a). The guest speaker must only teach about content and use materials and methods that have been approved by the school district.
- Inform the guest speaker that most decisions about program content are made at the local level. Teachers and guest speakers must follow the approved program and any changes are subject to a multi-step approval process before presentation in the classroom.

- Inform the guest speaker of relevant school district policy related to topics or issues which are prohibited or limited, and share the district's policies regarding answering student questions on those and other topics.
- Meet with the speaker ahead of time, to ensure that the presentation will enhance, and not replace, the current lessons and stay within the boundaries of the law and local policy.
- Provide the guest speaker with a scope and sequence of the course content and let them know how their piece fits into the broader unit of instruction. Highlight topics that are needed to meet A-K requirements, or those that address Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations or Michigan Merit Curriculum Credit Guidelines.
- Request to preview a videotaped sample of the presentation, PowerPoint slides, handouts, student worksheets, materials for parents, and media prior to the presentation. Schedule the presentation with enough notice to allow time for parent notification. Be sure that the content, materials, and methods of the presentation are consistent with the information that is being or has already been sent home to inform parents about the program.
- Inform the speaker that you must be present during the entire presentation and are responsible for assigning grades, testing and assessing student work.
- Prepare students before the guest speaker's visit regarding the focus of the presentation and your expectations for their learning and behavior.

During the Presentation

- Be present in the classroom during the entire presentation. Avoid the use of substitute teachers during a guest speaker presentation. The teacher is responsible for the content and methodology of the presentation.
- During the presentation, assess the following:
 - Is the content developmentally appropriate and medically accurate?
 - Is the presentation engaging?
 - Does the speaker avoid shame and fear-based messages?
 - Does the speaker interact with students in a respectful and professional manner?
 - Is information presented in an objective and non-biased way?
 - Is the content and materials appropriate for, and inclusive of, learners of differing races, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, socio-economic levels, and abilities?
 - Does the presentation encourage students to talk with parents and/or other trusted adults?
 - Does the presentation emphasize abstinence as a positive choice for young people?
- If the presentation deviates from the agreed-upon content, thank the speaker for coming and end the presentation.

After the Presentation

- After the presentation, process the session with both the presenter and the students. Gather feedback from students and write down your observations and experiences to inform future decisions.
- Keep the building administrator informed of all aspects of guest presentations.

Questions? Contact Laurie Bechhofer, HIV/STD Education Consultant, Michigan Department of Education at BechhoferL@Michigan.Gov or 517-335-7252. Or visit www.michigan.gov/hived