

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION MADE EASY IN SA PRIMARY SCHOOLS



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OVERVIEW

Teach It Like It Is: Primary

Sexual health is much broader than the biological 'bits and pieces' of puberty, reproduction and sexual activity. Relationships and sexuality are key contributors to identity and wellbeing, and children/adolescents have a natural desire to understand this aspect of their health. Schools have a mandated responsibility to provide students with progressive and developmental

knowledge and skills that empower them to respond effectively to contemporary issues. Educators need capacity and confidence to provide these learning opportunities in a positive and safe environment.

SHine SA makes it easy for primary schools to Teach It Like It Is using a whole school approach, with links to the *Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum*.

KEY MESSAGES

The best investment a school can make is in building the capacity, capability and confidence of its staff to deliver Relationships and Sexual Health (R&SH) education.

The *Teach It Like It Is: Primary* curriculum and professional learning opportunities empower educators to facilitate a comprehensive R&SH education program that is easily accessible, well resourced, well supported and fun.

WHY



The importance of relationships and sexuality education within the curriculum

Children and young people receive daily messages about relationships and sexuality from television, film, music, advertising, computer games, the internet, friends and family. Sex is frequently joked about, discussed in derogatory ways or considered private or taboo. Many adults are concerned about the impact of sexual images and pornography on children, but lack confidence to initiate conversations about these topics. However, students' needs and outcomes are best achieved when parents, carers and schools work together to facilitate balanced, positive and age-appropriate relationships and sexual health education.

Students need learning opportunities that engage them in critical inquiry to help them respond effectively to life experiences. This means exploring and evaluating contextual factors that influence their feelings, actions, interactions and decision-making. The R&SH curriculum provided by SHine SA goes beyond the important biological knowledge and understanding associated with reproductive health, and encourages teachers and learners to look at concepts of relationships and sexuality such as communication, consent, stereotypes, power, gender, diversity and the influence of media and technology.

The SHine SA *Teach It Like It Is: Primary* curriculum and associated professional learning helps staff to develop a holistic approach, shared language and respectful informed discourse, and support students to manage their relationships and wellbeing.

WHAT



SA schools embracing principles of best practice for R&SH education

In South Australia many primary schools have shifted from the traditional model of employing an external provider to deliver parent/child information evenings, to investing in the competence and confidence of their own teaching staff to deliver comprehensive R&SH curriculum.

...we decided to look for a program that we could teach ourselves and that was broader in content than the growth and development course provided externally. ...Running the course ourselves allowed for tailoring that took into account our students, their individual knowledge and histories. The feedback from parents, staff and students has been most positive. Primary School Principal 2015

Guided by the 12 Principles of Best Practice, SHine SA advocates that R&SH education needs to be delivered by trained staff who have ongoing, day-to-day relationships with their students and families. By investing in professional learning for their staff, these schools are able to effectively ensure their R&SH programs create authentic learning opportunities for their students that are respectful of diversity, including culture, religion, sexuality and family values.

HOW



Joining the SHine SA Schools Education and Support network

SHine SA has a memorandum of operational collaboration with the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) to support primary years educators with R&SH professional learning, curriculum planning, methodologies and resources. The SHine SA *Teach It Like It Is: Primary* curriculum Years 5-7 contains 45 lessons with learning activities that ensure students have opportunities to practise, create, apply and evaluate the knowledge and understanding needed to make meaning of their relationships and sexuality, and develop skills and attitudes that are the foundation for respectful relationships in their daily lives. Topics such as puberty, reproduction, consent, relationships, diversity, gender, power, decision-making, safe behaviours and seeking help are addressed in age and developmentally appropriate ways and revisited each year. The companion resource *Yarning Like It Is* has culturally relevant activities for Aboriginal students, and all curriculum materials are linked to the *Australian Curriculum* and the *Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum*.

To access the Schools Education and Support services of SHine SA, primary school educators simply register online for the 15-hr professional learning course (includes training and associated resource manuals). This two-day interactive workshop focuses on conceptual understanding of the topics, and provides practical examples of how this learning could be actioned with students in the school environment.

OUTCOMES



Outcomes in action

In the past two years, 332 staff from 129 separate schools (31% of SA schools with a primary component) have attended a SHine SA 15-hour R&SH primary training course to access the Years 5-7 curriculum.

With the goal to support the educators who have ongoing relationships with the students they teach, SHine SA content, methodologies and resources ensure sexual health education is easy for SA primary schools. Feedback from educators who attend the training endorses the professional learning, and feedback from students who participate in the program endorses the curriculum in action. A win-win for all involved.

TEACH IT LIKE IT IS PRIMARY

A RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION CURRICULUM RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN YEARS 5-7



Students Tell It Like It Is...

Do you think the course will be useful to you now or in the future?

The course told us a lot about safety and respect for ourselves.
It gives you information that you need to know for future purposes.
It taught us to be safe.
I learnt a lot of things about sexual health I didn't know before.

What was the most important or interesting thing you learnt about?

I learnt that there are more than girl/boy relationships.
Everyone is different and you should respect that.
You can always ask for help.
Condoms are the only form of contraception that prevents STIs.

Have you talked about any of these topics with your carers/family?

I showed my mum the take home messages.
Good communication is one of the most important things for a good relationship (sexual or otherwise).
I tell my parents what we did in the lessons.

Was the course respectful and inclusive of same sex attraction?

There is nothing wrong with same sex attraction.
I think you should add more same sex information in the lessons.
Everyone is treated equally.
I learnt that relationships are important.

What changes would you make to improve the course?

✓ more time
✓ more activities
✓ more talking
✓ more DVDs and media
✓ more lessons
✓ It's a good course now!

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

The knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with R&SH education are fundamental to learning and life. The *Teach It Like It Is: Primary* curriculum provides a relevant, structured framework for educators working with students in Years 5-7, building the capacity and confidence of staff and students, and promoting strategies to actively engage parents in educative conversations about relationships and sexual health with their children.