

Fifth Graders Quizzed on Proper Condom Use

Does your fifth grader know how to use a condom? They may soon learn if they go to school in Washington, D.C.

The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent on Education is pushing out standardized tests for sex education. The District takes its authority to administer sex education tests to fifth, eighth, and tenth graders from the Healthy Schools Act of 2010.

Here's how it works: Children as young as 10 will be asked 50 questions. One of the questions reads: "TJ wants to remain abstinent, but also wants to know how to properly use a condom in case he is ever in a situation where he might become sexually active. Give TWO reasons why using a condom properly is important and describe THREE people or places that could give TJ accurate information about condom use."

"The guideline questions necessitate age-inappropriate instruction for 10 and 11-year-olds. Previously, comprehensive sex education advocates would have the minimal—but insufficient—courtesy of allowing parents to opt their children out of their classes," says Emmett McGroarty, executive director of the Preserve Innocence Initiative. "Now, parents are being informed that a non-mandatory class is being replaced by a mandated test."

McGroarty argues that sexual decisions have serious moral and spiritual implications, and even comprehensive sexual education curricula openly acknowledge it. As he sees it, now is time to find solutions that empower parents to address issues related to STDs rather than undermining parental authority, meddling in admittedly spiritual decisions and imposing a one-size-fits-all test on local schools.

“As a man who was raised in inner-city Washington, I know that many District families believe that sex is more than biological—that it should be a full expression of committed, life-giving love,” McGroarty says. “Many families will be horrified that the District education establishment is demeaning sex-related education topics to the level of a standardized test.”