

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Instructional Materials Review 2026

Love Notes Classic 4.0

Year Published/Revised: 2023

Publisher: Dibble Institute

Website: [Love Notes 4.0 – Digital License Journal \(English\) - The Dibble Institute](#)

Full or Supplemental: Full

Grade Level: 9–12

Student Population: General

Duration/Number of Lessons: 13 lessons, video guide and supporting activity cards.

Format and Features: Digital and printable curriculum, activity cards, participant journal, and instructor manual.

Materials Provide Support for online or in-person learning: Yes

Available in Multiple Languages: Yes, English and Spanish.

Evidence-based/informed: Evidence-based

National Standards Alignment: No

Consistent with WA Health Education Standards? Yes

Consistent with Comprehensive Sexual Health Education Law? No

Consistent with AIDS Omnibus Act? No

Inclusive Materials/Strategies: No

Bias-Free Materials: No



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Primary Subject Areas and Topics Required by Law:

- ☐ Anatomy and Physiology, Reproduction, and Pregnancy (Pregnancy for Grade 6+)
- ☐ Growth and Development/Puberty
- ☐ Self-Identity (gender stereotypes, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.)
- ☐ Prevention (general)
 - ☐ HIV/AIDS Prevention
 - ☐ Pregnancy Prevention
 - ☒ STD Prevention
 - ☐ Health Care and Prevention Resources
- ☒ Healthy Relationships (general)
 - ☐ Affirmative Consent
 - ☐ Bystander Training
 - ☒ Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication Skills for Healthy Relationships
 - ☒ The development of meaningful relationships and avoidance of exploitative relationships
 - ☒ Understanding the influences of family, peers, community, and the media throughout life on healthy sexual relationships

Reviewer Comments:

Med. Acc. Reviewer ID 414

This curriculum is heavy on the emotional side of all the issues and isn't as focused on a strong review of contraceptive methods or pregnancy options. There is very little address of abortion, which is more common than adoption.

I think it does offer a lot of different ways to connect with teens to discuss difficult topics. I thought the bullying videos were particularly good.

Med. Acc. Reviewer ID 415

Recommend including acknowledgment of sexual abuse/assault (e.g., pg. 6 "Sex—It's More than Bodies, Risks").

Question relevance of evidence base: Relationship Smarts (and Love Notes) were listed in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices in 2012—does this reflect current best practice?

Lesson 11: Reinforce that sexual experiences are not always consensual or pleasurable; include explicit acknowledgment of assault/abuse.



Section 11.1 ("Let's Talk About Sex"): Framing around "what makes sex good" feels dismissive of prior content on assault/pregnancy and may be retraumatizing for survivors.

Content concerns (pg. 305): Discussion of arousal timing and "females faking orgasms" feels outdated and potentially inappropriate.

Overall: Curriculum reads as heavily binary and could be more inclusive.

Med. Acc. Reviewer ID 416

I do not recommend use of this curriculum. It is highly heteronormative and not inclusive and is very disparaging and judgmental toward different lifestyles. I have included further comments below.

- You should not conflate love and sex; they are not mutually exclusive. pg 101
- Don't like the love and infatuation section. Love can also be toxic, and this dichotomy is not helpful or accurate. Infatuation is not inherently wrong and love is not inherently good. It's also odd to intertwine the trusted adult with love and infatuation conversation. They should be very separate.
- page 113. Smart and not so smart activity seems highly judgmental.
- Lesson 6 healthy relationships are well done and thoughtful and explain how to recognize healthy relationships and remove yourself from relationships.
- Lesson 7, good discussion of dangerous relationships and consent.
- Lesson 8, pg 185, the push for marriage is not ideal. Families can exist in many different forms including outside of marriage and it's not a requirement to be married before having children to ensure a better life.
- the "keep sliding" language is highly problematic, judgmental and derogatory.
- lesson 9.4: the speaker-listener technique is a good lesson on better communication skills.
- lesson 9.5: relationship in digital age seems out of touch with current digital practices.
- Lesson 11: casual and relational sex is overly simplistic. It hints that "good" sex only happens in romantic relationships and is judgmental and shaming.
- overall, this curriculum is incredibly heteronormative and not inclusive of different types of healthy relationships.
- Lesson 13, pg 319. The discussion on Black fathers is racist. You cannot talk about the absence of black fathers without talking about the racist policies that made that a reality for many families, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. The signaling out of Black fathers as absent is a racist sentiment.

Reviewer ID 401

I do think it meets most of the key standards we are looking for, and has some excellent information, though it also has content that concerns me. I think a key theme of my concern is that it is lacking in cultural relevance, to start. The graphics, materials, and



most media are well out of date (perhaps the curriculum has been updated but not these key details). For example, the suggested film Antwun Fisher is from 2002- well before most teens were even born now. The short videos in Let's Talk About Sex and other sections are over 9 years old.

Although the curriculum does use a wide variety of resources including materials and references for Planned Parenthood, Love Is Respect, and RAINN, some resources are not appropriate. The curriculum states that "Love Notes and other instructional materials support the work of The Dibble Institute®, a nonprofit, non-sectarian, non-political educational organization established to advocate and provide research-based, best practices materials for youth relationship education", but the curriculum includes direct links to religiously affiliated organizations/resources including the participant journal suggesting CoupleCheckup.com on Page 10. When I went to this website the landing page has a video on "How do you get strong couples?" the video opens with "this is a strong church in a thriving community which is built on strong couples". They answer their title question by saying you strengthen couples by strengthening marriages. When I looked into the organization that created couplecheckup.com called "Prepare/Enrich", their stated goal is to decrease divorce and they are sponsored by several religiously affiliated institutions including Hillsong Church which has faced significant controversies, including leadership failures and infidelity, high-profile sexual abuse scandals involving leaders, and criticisms regarding its strict, conservative stance on LGBTQ+ issues. There is nothing inherently wrong with a religiously affiliated curriculum; we've seen OWL to be effective, for example. However, I do take issue as a sexual health educator with a curriculum that does not state its values and affiliations outright, particularly when it claims to be evidence-based yet there are subliminal messages about traditional/conservative/religious perspectives (the author also works for a conservative think tank- the Institute for Family Studies: <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/institute-for-family-studies/>).

Along with the suggested resource of couplecheckup.com, the text emphasizes spirituality as a key concept relating to intimacy. "Spiritual: When couples talk about what's really important—like their values, what's influenced their life, or religious, philosophical, moral, and political beliefs—that is spiritual. Talking on this level enhances their connection." Framing this as spirituality rather than values and beliefs contributes to the religious undertone.

Along with the religious undertones, this curriculum does not adequately address pregnancy prevention or STI prevention, unless you consider these to be supplementary topics in a curriculum that is primarily for healthy relationships. It only mentions both briefly in a few places, but even with the concept of pregnancy, feels quite pro-natalist and it is assumed to be wanted by both parties in multiple places.



*Resource 12a needs to be updated (e.g. Paragard (copper) IUD offers birth control protection for 12 years but lists it as 10).

I do believe that many of the qualities this curriculum focuses on to build healthy marriages, and co-parenting relationships are important and valuable, but they do not feel relevant or age appropriate for 9th-12th grade for a general population, given the focus on marriage throughout. (I have more to say but no space).

Reviewer ID 411

The Love Notes 4.0 Classic curriculum offers an engaging and user-friendly framework for grades 9-12. The instructional flow is strong, beginning with student self-assessments and identification of a trusted adult, and ending with more sensitive topics being presented later in the curriculum when classroom norms have been better established. Teachers will likely appreciate the detailed scripts and clear assignment directions. Students should enjoy the diverse multimedia options, such as the music suggestions/links for each class, and relevant digital activities like creating fake (but thoughtful) dating app profiles. The lessons include constructive healthy relationship strategies often found in relationship therapy. The content shifts away from traditional fear-based education, and offers more supportive, pleasure-based concepts, which can cultivate a non-judgmental space for all students, including teen parents.

However, the curriculum presents some concerns. One of these issues includes the use of the term "pornography addiction" in Lesson 12, along with the associated "science" video; clinically, this is not a diagnosable condition and would more accurately fall under a Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder diagnosis. Additionally, Lesson 13 includes a concern with perpetuating racial and gendered stereotypes by focusing part of the lesson exclusively on the absence of fathers, as opposed to focusing on the responsibilities of all people who become parents. To remain objective and inclusive, these concepts should be reframed as gender-neutral single-parenting issues. The link to the "Dadication" video in this section does not work. There is also a noticeable "time-warp" effect with some of the media resources being 10–15 years old, despite the recent publication of this curriculum.

From an inclusivity and accessibility standpoint, the curriculum could benefit from more development. While the media is visually diverse, the content is heavily heteronormative. There is only mention of transgender individuals in Lesson 12, and there is virtually no representation of people with disabilities throughout the curriculum. The lack of adaptations for English Language Learners (ELL) or Special Education (SPED) students is also a missed opportunity for a state-level curriculum. Additionally, there is some potentially triggering content about sexual assault and suicide in the media, but there is a lack of clear guidance or warnings in the scripts to help teachers navigate these moments with a trauma-informed lens.



Finally, there are some logistical hurdles in the structure of the lessons that would need to be analyzed before classroom implementation. Lesson 12 is disproportionately dense, and includes pregnancy prevention, STIs, and pornography into a single session that is listed as being almost twice as long as other lessons. These topics should be partially broken up into separate lessons to reduce cognitive overload. The current listed time allotments for each lesson in the curriculum also fails to account for much student discussion, or the use of supplemental media. This will force teachers to make material cuts in, in order to the content is class periods lasting less than 60 minutes. There are also 13 total lessons, which may exceed the 2-week time frame most schools set aside for sexual health education. Finally, there are color journals pages and handouts, which might be a potential budget barrier if districts need to color copy the material or buy the source material booklets for larger classes of students.

Overall, this is a thoughtful curriculum with a lot of valuable interpersonal relationship information for Washington state youth. However, teachers would need to address the issues of lesson pacing, and improve representation of all protected classes, in order for this to be a truly comprehensive curriculum.

Reviewer ID 403

Teaches about more than just sex relationships, why being a dad matters, what happens when living together without being married and the issues it brings up. Emphasis on struggling kids who are having sex and getting pregnant, not the "smart" kids. Includes the detriments of porn and the issues in relationships, view of sex and sexual assault changing. Great that it includes interviews with this with well-known stars. Touches on human trafficking. Large focus on healthy relationships. Delves into what violence in a relationship looks like. Needs the medical/biology components

Reviewer ID 406

I would use this as a supplement to a more comprehensive sexual health curriculum and not a stand-alone sexual health curriculum since it lacks some of the more foundations sexual health information such as explicit lessons on birth control methods, STIs etc.

Reviewer ID 405

Love Notes 4.0 is a relationship-centered curriculum that strongly supports communication, consent, and decision-making skills. It includes many varied interactive activities and reflection opportunities that are engaging for students. It does not fully cover key topics such as reproductive biology, contraception effectiveness, STI/STD prevention (besides abstinence), access to health services, and advocacy. The lessons on these topics seem to assume some prior education and



keep the framing on relationships and decision-making. It would make more sense as a supplemental material than a full comprehensive curriculum.

The curriculum has some thoughtful moments about inclusion but is still primarily heteronormative—its inclusion of LGBTQ+ identities and diverse experiences is relatively surface-level. The curriculum promotes a “success sequence” (finish school, get a job, marry, then have children) as the ideal path, which feels narrow-minded and traditional and may exclude students with different experiences or identities.

The curriculum often emphasizes individual responsibility which supports skill-building around decision-making, but this can slip into judgmental and victim-blaming framing (such as “smart vs. not smart” choices in lesson 5 and “decide, don’t slide” language, and sexting lesson), unintentionally putting blame on young people in contexts involving unequal power or coercion. The use of “you” language throughout the lessons, along with cautions of worst-case scenarios, creates a tone that can feel fear-based and blaming, even though the intent is prevention.

The use of popular media like music videos and tv shows and celebrity interviews can be engaging for students. However, several of the short films feel slightly outdated and have a moralistic tone that might make some students feel shamed, judged, or afraid (particularly videos in lesson 7, 11, and 12). The overall tone again places too much emphasis on personal responsibility—though it is intended to build self-efficacy, it runs into victim blaming. The graphics and video in lesson 7 are over-dramatized and fear based, I would not use it.

The curriculum would be strengthened with a more deeply inclusive, trauma-informed approach that emphasizes rights and autonomy and support rather than a values-based, risk avoidance framework.

