

Project title: Teacher Perspectives and Practices: Sexuality Education in Texas Public Schools

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Department: HPER

Project summary:

This study assessed indicators of adoption of abstinence-only-until-marriage education as an innovation by health education teachers in the state of Texas. This study also assessed teachers' likelihood of adopting such programs. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory provided a theoretical framework for this study. The research design utilized a survey that measured health education teachers' perceptions of the attributes of abstinence-only-until-marriage education.

Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs represent approaches that vary in their length, components, and messages conveyed. The number of schools implementing the abstinence education message in their curriculum is growing. One of the factors influencing the acceptance of abstinence education programs is the support of school teachers. School teachers contribute to the adoption of abstinence-only-until-marriage school-based programs. Research, therefore, helps educators appreciate and understand the influence of administrative adoption on abstinence education.

Sample participants were stratified by Texas Education Service Center Regions (there are 20 in the state of Texas). 900 surveys were mailed to educators and 323 were returned, yielding a 35.8% response rate. Research findings will be presented according to the five categories of adoption (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability).

School health programs involve issues of sexuality education. One emerging trend is the presentation of abstinence-only-until-marriage education programs. Teacher support for a variety of programs is key for program success. The knowledge of adoption characteristics for abstinence initiatives is essential knowledge for health educators.