Background

A 2008 sexual health community needs assessment found:

• The preferred strategy to reduce teen pregnancy, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in Boise teens was comprehensive sex education.

• The Independent School District of Boise (ISDB) had an abstinence-only sex education policy, so the strategy could not be implemented.

Purpose

• Understand what influences sex education policy decision-making at ISDB
• Inform the adoption of evidence-based sex education

Design

A qualitative case study described the most recent sex education policy decision made at ISDB.

Methods

• Unstructured one-on-one interviews with
  o Two Board of Trustee members
  o Five ISDB employees
• Archival record and document review
• Review of 2008 sexual health community needs assessment of Boise

Results

Five primary categories of influence emerged:

• Fear of conflict by Trustees led to avoidance of sex education issues.
• Trustees lacked knowledge of worsening teen sexual health, evidence-based sex education curricula, parental support, and statewide sex education policies.
• The Trustee’s perception that the community value was abstinence until marriage prevented ISDB from facing the reality of teen sexuality.
• ISDB staff strictly adhered to the abstinence-only policy to avoid controversy.
• Bureaucracy was a barrier to communication between teachers, school nurses, and administration.

Implications

• Strong community support for evidence-based sex education is essential to change policy.
• Nurses, teachers, and parents need to collaborate to bring vital information to Trustees.
• Strategies to improve communication regarding sexuality are needed.
• Additional research about teens’ perceptions of sex education may increase effectiveness.