

My name is Tami Sanderson. I come to you today as the parent of a 14-year-old high school freshman, who is fully in support of replacing Abstinence only sex education with comprehensive sex education in the public school system throughout the state.

Like most parents, I do not want my daughter to have sex at her age; however, there are many things I may not want for her that she feels differently about and the only way she can make a good decision is with All of the information we can arm her with.

We can no longer afford to believe that shaming our kids, laying guilt on them or telling them to 'just say no' accomplishes anything but leaving them ill prepared and even more vulnerable to teen pregnancy and STD's.

If we are going to educate them then that education should be useful and also apply beyond their teenage years. That education should include information on abstinence, STD's, and birth control.

The ministry that comes into my daughter's school to present the Abstinence only sex education program incorporates its values, morals and opinions and leaves out vital information that could protect our teens. This program stretches beyond sex education to define a marriage and even a family. I sat in on one of the presentations and watched with sadness as two students who I knew to be homosexual sat in shame, trying not to participate or be single out; these students were being educated on the morals and values of the ministry but little else.

I have worked on this issue for a year. Armed with my computer and friends I have talked to countless people within the school district as well as representatives of Pregnancy Care of Cincinnati Ministries, who present the sex ed program in the Loveland City School district. And then I talked to my daughter. I asked her one simple question, "What is it you want from your sex education program?"

Without hesitation she looked at me and said, "The truth, the facts." She added, "In science we are given the facts and formulas to find solutions and in math we are given the equations and the formulas to solve them. Why can't we be given the same when it comes to sex education?"

Last Tuesday as I was going over what I wanted to say today my daughter said to me, "...if we are ever going to learn how to make important decisions, as important as whether or not we are going to have sex or when we are going to have sex, and under what conditions, then we need to know everything possible to make those decisions. We are encouraged to make decisions everyday on our own, to use our critical thinking, but somehow they don't think we can do the same when it comes to sex? Is it you are all uncomfortable thinking and talking about sex so you would rather we didn't talk about it or think about it or learn about it? So, what are we supposed to do even if we wait until we are married, get pregnant right away because we don't know how to prevent a pregnancy because we were never taught? It's not our problem, we want to know, it's the adults who seem to have the issue and it shouldn't be an issue. I mean it's a natural thing, right?"

She gets it and she's only 14, when are we going to get it and arm our kids with the tools they need to make solid decisions regarding sex? I am hoping today is the start of that, that you will hear not just my words but more importantly my daughter's words and they will help you see how important it is to give them the truth and the facts through comprehensive sex education.