

# Choosing the Best PATH

## Seventh Grade

### Wythe County Public Schools

#### **Virginia's Abstinence Education Program (AEP)**

Choosing the Best Aims to increase the number of youth aged 10 to 19 who abstain from sexual activity and other related risky behaviors. Consistent with Title V Federal guidelines A-H for abstinence education, Choosing the Best curricula serve school systems and community groups. A recently published study indicated that students who received Choosing the Best were nearly 1.5 times more likely to delay the onset of sexual behavior than students who did not receive the program. Teachers and parents alike praise our age-appropriate materials!

#### **Choosing the Best PATH Grade 7**

Eight lessons emphasize the straight facts about health risks and give students the emotional strength and self-discipline to commit to abstinence until marriage.

#### **Choosing the Best Path**

##### **For Upper Middle School – 7th Grade**

Direct enough to command teens' attention, this 8-session curriculum also helps communicate, dynamically and positively, the value of choosing sexual delay. Videos that open each lesson lead naturally to a vibrant discussion. The 45-minute segments include topics such as sexual violence prevention, understanding consent, healthy relationships, and role-plays that help teens avoid at-risk behaviors. Topics include:

- **Developing Healthy Relationships**

Students learn how to identify healthy versus unhealthy relationships, along with 5 tips for developing healthy relationships.

- **Preventing Sexual Violence**

Students learn that sexual violence can include everything from unwanted sexual fondling to internet sexual harassment to rape or attempted rape and that it is NEVER the victim's fault. The lesson covers how to get help if you or someone you know has been a victim and teaches the 5 key components of consent.

- **Preventing STDs**

This lesson provides detailed, medically accurate information about common STDs, including symptoms, potential complications, and treatments. Students learn how STDs are spread, along with the benefits and limitations of "safe" or "safer sex" and why sexual delay is the best STD prevention strategy. One-fourth of new STDs occur in boys and girls aged 15-19.

- **Preventing Teen Pregnancy**

A real-life teen couple shares the struggle of an unintended pregnancy. After teens evaluate choices and consequences, they can clearly see the value of delaying sex for their health and future.

- **Avoiding HIV/AIDS**

Teens are educated about the myths versus facts about HIV/AIDS and, as they listen to a young woman share how it feels to live with HIV/AIDS, learn compassion.

- **Choosing the Best LIFE**

Teens hear others share why they've chosen sexual delay and then participate in a discussion about the differences between love and infatuation. Teens are encouraged to think about their personal goals and how choosing to delay sex could benefit their future.

- **Setting Limits**

Beginning with setting personal boundaries, teens learn practical ways to handle sexual pressure from peers and others. Included is a discussion about the dangers of sexting.

- **Resisting Pressure**

Practical role-plays enable students to develop and sharpen assertiveness skills, verbally and non-verbally, to resist unwanted sexual pressure.

### **Why Choosing the Best Works:**

Choosing the Best utilizes the following five keys to effective abstinence and relationship education:

- **Motivational Learning Environment**

Video vignettes of real-life teens, in-depth discussions, classroom exercises, and role-plays engage the students in learning.

- **Medical Learning Model**

Current information on STDs, emotional consequences, and teen pregnancy.

- **Relationship Education and Refusal Skills**

Provides students with the confidence to handle negative peer and relationship pressures.

- **Parent Involvement**

The student manual provides at-home opportunities for parent-student interaction.

- **Character Education**

Students are challenged to develop respect, self-respect, compassion, honesty, and courage. All classes are taught in gender-separated environments. Questions are allowed, and students are permitted to write questions anonymously on an index card at the end of each class.

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Audio-visual materials are available to view by parents upon request. Descriptions of the videos are provided in the Resource Section of this material.

The Presentation follows The Virginia Family Life Education Board of Education Guidelines and Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools. The standards for the seventh grade are as follows.

### **Choosing the Best PATH**

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## ***STANDARDS OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENTS***

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### **SEVENTH GRADE**

**7.1 The student will identify his or her role and relationships within the family.**

Descriptive Statement: Content includes identification of personal interactions; communication skills; ways of meeting emotional, physical, and intellectual needs; and the student's contribution to the family unit. Students learn the positive benefits of personal sacrifice to support family goals and needs when such a decision is indicated.

**7.2 The student will recognize the physical development of his or her sex characteristics and how they affect emotional and social growth.**

Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is placed on the biological and physiological changes of early adolescence. Attention is given to such secondary sex characteristics as body growth, genital changes, hormonal secretions, the onset of menstruation, and sex-response feelings. Instruction promotes self-awareness and alleviates anxiety through factual information regarding menstruation, spontaneous erections, nocturnal emissions, masturbation, and differences in growth rates and development.

**7.3 The student will realize that physical affection does not have to be sexual, but it also can be an expression of friendship, of celebration, or of a loving family.**

Descriptive Statement: The student learns that appropriate expressions of affection are essential for emotional, physical, and psychological health. The student will recognize the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical affection. Characteristics of abusive relationships will be addressed.

**7.4 The student will recognize that sexual behaviors are conscious decisions; that it is important to say "no" to premarital, abusive, and inappropriate sexual relationships; and that appropriate relationships are based on mutual respect, trust, and caring.**

Descriptive Statement: Sexual feelings are interpreted as normal and to be expected but not always to be manifested in behavior. Instruction includes an explanation of the differences between needs and desires, assertive skills, problem-solving or conflict resolution, and alternatives. Refusal skills are taught and practiced by students. Characteristics of abusive relationships, which may also involve alcohol and other drug use and abuse or inappropriate use of electronic devices such as phones or the internet, are addressed. In addition, the consequences of teenage pregnancy, the nature of sexually transmitted infections, and the benefits of delaying sexual activity are discussed.

**7.5 The student will identify messages in society related to sexuality.**

Descriptive Statement: The teacher guides the student in discovering and analyzing messages about sexuality found in advertising media, music and videos, television, films, printed materials, and graffiti. Students learn to recognize gender stereotyping and sexual exploitation. They are encouraged to evaluate and counteract any negative effects identified and to engage in a variety of positive activities rather than spending too much time viewing media containing negative components. Students will demonstrate how these messages affect mental health issues related to sexuality.

**7.6 Students will explore safety issues related to the Internet.**

Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes how predators can use the Internet to exploit young people, to include human (child/teen sex) trafficking, common techniques and lures used by Internet predators, information posted to social media sites that make students vulnerable, and strategies for protecting personal information and seeking adult support in uncomfortable situations.

**7.7 The student will be aware of the consequences of preteen and teenage sexual intercourse.**

Descriptive Statement: Instruction focuses on updated, factual information regarding sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; pelvic inflammatory disease (PID); cervical cancer; unintended pregnancy; and discussion about reputation, guilt, and anxiety. The discussion also includes the emotional, psychological, and financial implications of sexual activity and parenting before marriage. Students are guided in identifying positive aspects about themselves as reasons for avoiding risk-taking behavior. They also learn about the positive results and freedoms associated with postponing sexual activity.

**7.8 The student will list the adverse consequences of pregnancy in early adolescence, as well as the positive benefits of postponing pregnancy until marriage.**

Descriptive Statement: Instruction includes a review of pregnancy and childbirth from previous grade levels, as well as a discussion of responsibilities involved and adverse consequences encompassing the emotional, mental, physical, social, and economic impact on young parents, on their families, and on society. The nutritional implications of high-risk infants and teenage mothers also are included. The effects of an adolescent pregnancy on the student's lifelong goals and potential achievements are emphasized. The benefits of being married before having children and the effects on the family, child, and community will be discussed.

**7.9 The student will describe the signs and symptoms of pregnancy.**

Descriptive Statement: Instruction involves physical and psychological changes and the need for early detection of pregnancy through medical testing to ensure a healthy and successful pregnancy. Community resources for testing and/or further information are identified.

**7.10 The student will develop an understanding of and responsibility for family planning.**

Descriptive Statement: Content includes reasons for family planning, factors to be considered when planning a family, the role of the family physician, community resources, and methods of contraception.

**7.11 The student will explain techniques for preventing and reporting sexual assault and molestation.**

Descriptive Statement: Methods of handling assault and molestation, as well as prevention methods, are presented. Emphasis is placed on the importance of avoiding situations which could provide opportunities for molestation and sexual assault, including the homes and cars of acquaintances when no appropriate supervision is available. Students will practice appropriate use of the internet and text messaging. Key terms are defined. Approaches and behaviors, both in person and electronically, used by perpetrators are identified and explained. The signs of human sex trafficking and how to seek adult assistance will be discussed. Community resources for victims of molestation and assault are identified.

**7.12 The student will identify causes, symptoms, treatment, prevention, and transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.**

Descriptive Statement: Topics include the prevention, symptoms, treatment, transmission, and diagnosis of the following diseases in addition to HIV, Chlamydia, Genital Herpes, Gonorrhea, HPV, and Syphilis. In addition, myths are dispelled. High-risk activities, such as needle sharing for injection, intravenous drug use and abuse, and unprotected sexual activity, are discussed. Community resources that provide testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV are identified.

**7.13 The student will identify the issues associated with friendships.**

Descriptive Statement: The student accomplishes this by identifying the characteristics of each type of friendship and how friendships can change through developmental stages. The student will identify the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

**7.14 The student will realize the role of peers and the peer group during adolescence and the nature and purpose of dating.**

Descriptive Statement: The discussion focuses on the qualities of friendship, the importance of participating in peer groups that encourage the development of positive personal traits, and the nature of dating. Group dating is presented as a positive first step in developing romantic relationships, demonstrating appropriate and inappropriate dating behavior, utilizing positive mental health practices, and fulfilling dating responsibilities.

**7.15 The student will recognize contributions of various racial and ethnic groups to family life and society**

Descriptive Statement: Topics include the importance of racial and ethnic identity for families and the effects of negative stereotypes on families and individuals. Emphasis is placed on appreciation of racial and ethnic differences.

**7.16 The student will increase his or her ability to listen to different points of view and to accept the rights of others to a differing point of view.**

Descriptive Statement: Positive communication skills are developed to enhance relationships and to increase recognition of various points of view existing within families and society.