

November 13, 2014

Dear parent/guardian:

Between 2008 and 2012, your son or daughter attended one of 24 middle schools that participated in an evaluation of "*Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works*," a program developed by the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts. The goal of *Get Real* is to teach middle school students to delay having sex. Researchers from Wellesley Centers for Women did the evaluation of the program.

We want to thank your child, you, and your family for participating in this project; we couldn't have done this study without you. Here's what we found:

WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL SEX EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT

- Teens who have sex when they are middle school are more likely to drop out of school, get an infection, or have an unplanned pregnancy than teens who have sex when they're older.
- 18% of all teens have sex by 8th grade and 30% have sex by 9th grade.
- It is important for teens to learn about sexual issues before they have sex.

WHAT WE FOUND IN OUR STUDY

- *Get Real*, which includes both in-class lessons and family activities, can delay having sex for middle school students.
- Conversations with family members as part of *Get Real* lessons are particularly important for boys in helping them to delay having sex.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

- Sex education that (1) teaches about relationship skills, (2) gives correct information, and (3) encourages conversations between teens and their parents/guardians about the family's own values about sexual behavior WORKS.
- Parents/guardians who talk with their teens about sex make a difference!
Talk to your sons about sexual health, and, of course, to your daughters.

Resources: These books may be helpful resources for parents talking with their children about sex:

- Debra Haffner, *Beyond the Big Talk: Every Parent's Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Teens*.
- Deborah Roffman, *Sex and Sensibility: The Thinking Parents' Guide to Talking Sense about Sex*.

If you have questions about the *Get Real* curriculum, contact Planned Parenthood's Education & Training office at 617-616-1672 or educationontheweb@pplm.org.

If you would like more information about the evaluation study, visit www.wcwonline.org/SexEdEval or contact Jennifer Grossman, Ph.D., at the Wellesley Centers for Women at jgrossma@wellesley.edu.

P.S. Our findings were just recently published in the *Journal of School Health* (2014, Vol. 84, pp. 739-747).