

Lesson Plan

Risky Business **Exploring Adolescents' Concerns About Contracting and Testing for H.I.V.**

Author(s): Alison Zimbalist, The New York Times Learning Network
Lorin Driggs, The Bank Street College of Education in New York City

Grades: 6-12

Subjects: Health, Language Arts
Interdisciplinary Connections

Overview of Lesson Plan: Students reflect on the responsibility of newspapers to act as a vehicle for "everyday citizens" to voice their opinions. Then, students develop Voices articles modeled after those found in The New York Times to investigate the question, "Why do you think teens might believe that they don't need to be concerned about contracting H.I.V., and why might they not be concerned about being tested?"
Review the Academic Content Standards related to this lesson.

Suggested Time Allowance: 45 minutes- 1 hour

Objectives: **Students will:**

1. Distinguish the attitudes of other students their age regarding whether or not they are concerned with contracting H.I.V. and why they might have these attitudes.
2. Examine current H.I.V. testing trends among adolescents by reading and discussing "Young People Say Yes to H.I.V. Tests."
3. Understand the purpose and format of Voices articles written in The New York Times.
4. Obtain opinions and write Voices articles addressing the question, "Why do you think teens might believe that they don't need to be concerned about contracting H.I.V., and why might they not be concerned about being tested?"

Resources / Materials:

- student journals
- paper
- pens/ pencils
- classroom blackboard
- copies of "Young People Say Yes to H.I.V. Tests" (one per student)

Activities / Procedures:

NOTE TO TEACHERS: The topic of this lesson is the views of teen-agers regarding concerns about contracting or being tested for H.I.V., and what trends in those

views might indicate. Remind students that this discussion will be focusing on the issues in the article, not their personal practices or those of others that they know.

1. WARM-UP/DO-NOW: In their journals, students respond to the following questions (written on the board prior to class): How would you classify the attitudes of kids your age regarding whether or not they are concerned with contracting H.I.V.? Why might they have these attitudes? What are your views or concerns regarding H.I.V.? Students then share their answers.

2. In round-table discussion format, read "Young People Say Yes to H.I.V. Tests" and discuss the following questions:

- What is the significance of the statistics in the fourth paragraph of the article?
- Why did the study discussed in the article seek to learn about the attitudes of "sexually active and economically or socially marginalized youth in urban areas that have a high incidence of H.I.V."? How do you think the study might have changed if youths in other areas were included in the study?
- Why is H.I.V testing so critical for youths, and what suggestions in the article might increase the number of youths tested for H.I.V.? Do you think these suggestions might encourage kids your age to be tested? Why or why not?
- Why might youths who put themselves at risk for contracting H.I.V. not get tested?
- Why do you think teens might believe that they don't need to be concerned about contracting H.I.V.?
- What do you think it would take to convince kids to not engage in activities that put them at a higher risk of contracting H.I.V.?
- What do you think it would take to convince kids to be tested for H.I.V. on a regular basis?
- Do you feel that emphasis on H.I.V./AIDS awareness in the United States has lessened? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that if some type of cure for H.I.V. or AIDS is developed that people will return to the risky behaviors which promote the spread of H.I.V.?

3. Explain to students that besides presenting facts clearly and accurately, an important responsibility of the newspaper is to offer the opinions of the citizens who make up the general population. Tell students that they will be acting as journalists to find out how different people feel about H.I.V. and H.I.V. testing in a format that The New York Times calls "Voices" articles, which present factual information on a topic with emphasis on the various opinions of everyday citizens. Assign the focus question of the assignment, "Why do you think teens might believe that they don't need to be concerned about contracting H.I.V., and why might they not be concerned about being tested?" Brainstorm on the board what factual information might need to be presented in this article for readers to better understand the issues, as well as how factual information and opinions can be combined in an article on this topic. Then, discuss whose opinions they would want to obtain for the topic of focus and why, as well as how to record the opinions in the most precise way. (To most accurately quote the participants, responses should either be written down verbatim or filled out on a questionnaire that includes the focus question.)

4. WRAP-UP/ HOMEWORK: Now that they understand the purpose and format of a Voices article, students are ready to begin the process of obtaining opinions and writing these articles on their own. Students pose the focus question to at least five

people whose opinions they feel will be valuable. Students should also record each person's name, occupation, and age. This personal information often impacts how readers will understand their statement. Once the opinions are obtained, students organize their work, combining the facts from the article with the opinions in a logical way. Younger or less advanced students may want to present the factual information first and then create a section of opinions. Older or more advanced students may organize information by type of response (e.g., factual, emotional, anecdotal or insightful), in direct relation to the facts from the news article (e.g., a person's response mirrors or contrasts with a factual statement presented), or by participant type (e.g., grouping all student responses together). Students then write their Voices article, proofread their work, and bring their article to a future class for peer editing and teacher review prior to rewriting and perfecting their work.

Further Questions for Discussion:

- What is the difference between an epidemic and a pandemic?
- How is the H.I.V. virus contracted and spread in humans?
- What effects does H.I.V./AIDS have on the human body?
- What medical treatment is available to offset the development of full-blown AIDS?
- How does geography relate to understanding how this virus originally may have spread, as well as how other unknown viruses may be spreading?
- What factors in society contribute to a higher number of H.I.V./AIDS victims?
- How might an area that has poor resources and little or no funding for education or prevention programs realistically control the spread of H.I.V. in their community?
- Why might the numbers of people with H.I.V. grow more rapidly in a densely populated country (South Africa, Kenya, India, China) than in a sparsely populated country?
- What different H.I.V./AIDS education, prevention, and treatment programs exist in the United States?
- Do you feel that emphasis on H.I.V./AIDS awareness in the United States has lessened? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that if some type of cure for H.I.V. or AIDS is developed that people will return to the risky behaviors which promote the spread of H.I.V.?

Evaluation / Assessment:

Students will be evaluated based on written journal response, participation in class discussions, and thoughtful Voices article concerning views about why teens might believe that they don't need to be concerned about contracting H.I.V. and being tested for H.I.V.

Vocabulary:

documentary, marginalized, urban, consistently, confidential

Extension Activities:

1. Research H.I.V./AIDS prevention methods and treatment programs. Then, create informational pamphlets to distribute to other students or to be available to students through your school's counselors.
2. Learn about services and programs in the United States that help people become more aware of the risk factors and behaviors for H.I.V., prevent H.I.V. infection,

and receive H.I.V./AIDS counseling and treatments.

3. Write a brief persuasive essay offering possible solutions to curbing the H.I.V./AIDS pandemic. Think about services and programs implemented in the United States as an idea-generator for the solutions you offer.

4. Invite a medical professional or AIDS counselor to visit your class and discuss the issues raised in the article, as well as prevention and treatment programs.

5. Become a trained H.I.V./AIDS peer educator. Many cities have H.I.V./AIDS peer education programs (such as Project Reach Youth in Brooklyn, NY) that can train students to become peer educators.

6. Contact the NAMES Foundation, known for their AIDS Memorial Quilt, to bring pieces of the quilt to your school and work with students on the topic of H.I.V./AIDS prevention. (<http://www.aidsquilt.org>)

7. Write a poem or monologue as if written from the perspective of one of the people mentioned in the article and present it to the class.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Fine Arts- Design tiles for the AIDS quilt, or start a school-wide AIDS Quilt project for which students can design tiles and add them in a visible area of the school.

Geography- Research the percentages or numbers of reported H.I.V. and AIDS cases in countries around the world. (A useful resource is the United Nations' 1998 Human Development Index (HDI), which is a chart of statistics categorizing all countries based on longevity of its people (life expectancy), knowledge (literacy rate), and standard of living (GDP per capita). This can be found at (<http://www.undp.org/undp/hdro/98.htm/>.) Then, color-code a map to indicate the statistics that you find.

Global History- Learn about international health organizations that strive to educate and help victims of H.I.V. and AIDS in foreign countries.

Mathematics- Create a graph that illustrates either yearly statistics of reported H.I.V. and AIDS cases in the United States or that compares such statistics among different countries. What trends do these statistics and graphs illustrate?

Science- Create a chart of the functions of the immune system, indicating how different organs, glands, and body systems are involved in the fighting of disease.
-Research other epidemics and pandemics that have ravaged the human population in the past several centuries (polio, cholera, diphtheria, Ebola, hepatitis, influenza, Mad Cow, Bubonic Plague, smallpox, tuberculosis, typhoid, whooping cough). Anatomy of an Epidemic (<http://library.advanced.org/11170>) is an excellent resource for information on these diseases.
-Research HIV/AIDS from a biological standpoint, studying how the disease affects the human body, why it can be transferred easily through body fluids, and how AZT and other medications slow the effects of the disease.

Additional Related Articles:

The New York Times' continuing report on the AIDS pandemic, titled "Dead Zones," can be found on-line at (<http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/index-dead-zone.html>).

Other Information on the Web

The CDC, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov>), provides news and statistics about various diseases.

AIDS Education Global Information System, or AEGIS (<http://www.aegis.com>), is the world's largest H.I.V./AIDS knowledge base.

Journal of American Medical Association's H.I.V./AIDS Information Center (<http://www.ama-assn.org/special/HIV/HIVhome.htm>) provides the most up-to-date information about AIDS and H.I.V. research.

Academic Content Standards:

This lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards listed below. These standards are drawn from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education: 2nd Edition and have been provided courtesy of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning in Aurora, Colorado.

In addition, this lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards of a specific state. Links are provided where available from each McREL standard to the Achieve website containing state standards for over 40 states. The state standards are from Achieve's National Standards Clearinghouse and have been provided courtesy of Achieve, Inc. in Cambridge Massachusetts and Washington, DC.

Grades 6-8

Health Standard 2- Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health. Benchmark: Knows cultural beliefs, socioeconomic considerations, and other environmental factors within a community that influence the health of its members

Health Standard 8- Knows essential concepts about the prevention and control of disease. Benchmarks: Understands how lifestyle, pathogens, family history, and other risk factors are related to the cause or prevention of disease and other health problems; Knows communicable, chronic, and degenerative disease processes and the differences between them

Language Arts Standard 1- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmarks: Uses style and structure appropriate for specific audiences and purposes; Writes expository compositions; Writes compositions that speculate on problems/solutions

Language Arts Standard 4- Gathers and uses information for research purposes. Benchmarks: Gathers data for research topics from interviews (e.g., prepares and asks relevant questions, makes notes of responses, compiles responses); Organizes information and ideas from multiple sources in systematic ways

Grades 9-12

Health Standard 2- Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health. Benchmarks: Knows how the health of individuals can be influenced by the community; Understands how the environment influences the health of the community; Understands how the prevention and control of health problems are influenced by research and medical advances

Health Standard 8- Knows essential concepts about the prevention and control of disease. Benchmarks: Understands how the immune system functions to prevent or combat disease; Understands the importance of prenatal and perinatal care to both the mother and the child; Understands the social, economic, and political effects of disease on individuals, families, and communities

Language Arts Standard 1- Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmarks: Writes compositions that are focused for different audiences; Writes compositions that fulfill different purposes; Writes expository compositions; Writes persuasive compositions that evaluate, interpret, and speculate about problems/solutions and causes and effects

Language Arts Standard 4- Gathers and uses information for research purposes. Benchmarks: Uses a variety of primary sources to gather information for research topics; Identifies and defends research questions and topics that may be important in the future

Young People Open to H.I.V. Testing

By ALISA TANG

Jennifer Jako once had a "not me" attitude about AIDS.

"I really was an unlikely candidate for this disease," Ms. Jako, an AIDS educator and documentary film producer, said in a panel discussion in New York last week. "I didn't think this would happen to me."

Ms. Jako, who is from Lake Oswego, a suburb of Portland, Ore., tested positive for H.I.V. eight years ago, when she was 18.

Her youth was typical of many people testing positive: 51 percent of new H.I.V. infections in the United States are among people under 25, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Yet, the agency says, only a quarter of sexually active teen-agers have been tested.

The panel discussion was held to announce a study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, which explored the attitudes toward H.I.V. testing among 73 higher-risk teen-agers, defined as sexually active and economically or socially marginalized youth in urban areas that have a high incidence of H.I.V.

With few exceptions, the study found, young people believed that H.I.V. could not affect them. But most of the teen-agers said that, given the opportunity, they would be tested for the virus.

Maureen Michaels, president of Michaels Opinion Research, which conducted the study for the foundation, suggested that doctors ask sexually active adolescents whether they would like to be tested for H.I.V.

"It's a simple question," Ms. Michaels said. "It doesn't get asked all the time, but when it does, young people will say yes."

Authorities say that acting quickly is important. "The key to successful treatment is getting treatment early and consistently," said Victor Barnes, associate director for international H.I.V. prevention at the Centers for Disease Control. "For individuals who do not seek H.I.V. testing until they are experiencing symptoms of illness associated with H.I.V.-related diseases or AIDS itself, today's treatments cannot offer as much hope."

The teen-agers favored H.I.V. testing in offices that provided confidential and inexpensive tests, the study reported. Many did not want their parents to know.

Some of the teen-agers had called around for cost estimates for the H.I.V. test and given up because they thought they could not afford it and did not realize their other options, such as free testing in some cities.

The teen-agers also were more likely to be tested by doctors and nurses who respected the fact that they were sexually active. "I wouldn't have gotten tested if the nurse hadn't given me the opportunity," said Ms. Jako, who has received a grant from the Kaiser Foundation to travel and speak to young people about AIDS awareness. "As I was leaving the office, the nurse said, 'You've gotten tested for S.T.D.'s, why not get tested for H.I.V. as well?' My nurse and doctor were convinced that I was going to be healthy."

"I'm so grateful for their having provided me with the opportunity," Ms. Jako said. "It is their responsibility to give us the opportunity to be tested. If they hadn't tested me then, I could have attributed symptoms I had to other things, and I would never know to this day that I'm H.I.V. positive."