

Love Notes Crosswalk
The Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula
Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE)

15 Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula	<i>Love Notes</i>
1. Focuses on clear health goals and related behavioral outcomes.	<p>Each lesson begins with a clear list of goals. They focus on clear sexual and physical health goals, but also include social, emotional and relationship health goals. Together they strongly influence healthful behavioral outcomes. This is the unique approach of <i>Love Notes</i>.</p>
2. Provides functional health knowledge that is basic, accurate, and directly contributes to health-promoting decisions and behaviors.	<p><i>Love Notes</i> provides functional health knowledge that is basic, accurate, and inclusive, on sex, STIs, contraception/condoms, pregnancy and timing of family formation that contribute to healthy decision-making and behaviors. Included is functional health knowledge on partner abuse that may be sexual, physical and/or emotional. Also incorporated is functional knowledge on how healthy and unhealthy relationships impact health. This knowledge will be put to work with an array of activities and skill-building to contribute to health-promoting decisions and behaviors. (Skill-building activities detailed later in this document. Pages 6-9)</p> <p>Lesson 6 – Is It a Healthy Relationship?</p> <p>Contrasts between healthy and unhealthy relationships; explores impact on health; understanding breakups—handling them and ways to move forward in healthy ways.</p> <p>Lesson 7 – Dangerous Love</p> <p>Dating Violence—Forms & Prevalence; Types of IPV; Harm to Children; What is Sexual Assault/various forms of coercion.</p> <p>Lesson 8 – Decide, Don’t Slide! Pathways & Sequences Towards Success</p> <p>Presentation of concept “sliding vs. deciding”; A Low-Risk Deciding model; Outcomes associated with various pathways & sequences young adults have taken identified by recent research.</p> <p>Lesson 11 – Let’s Talk About Sex</p> <p>Survey & research findings on various contexts in which sex occurs and reported experiences of young people; Description of various forms of intimacy; Teen-scripted film portraying sexual situations</p>

Provides functional health knowledge that is basic, accurate, and directly contributes to health-promoting decisions and behaviors. (continued)

requiring decision-making; research findings on sexting—privacy myths/realities; build knowledge of sexual response cycle

Lesson 12 – Let’s Plan for Choices

Sex facts & myths; contraceptive methods & how they work; correct/incorrect condom usage, comprehensive STI/HIV functional health knowledge; video on HIV—myths/facts; recent research on mainstream pornography use by youth & potential effects

Lesson 13 – Through the Eyes of a Child

Early child developmental needs, how parents can provide these; research on father’s potential impact on children; research on influence of the quality of parental relationship (together or apart) on child wellbeing; research findings on cohabitation--when risky/when not; the benefits of planned pregnancy and parenthood.

3. Focuses on reinforcing protective factors and increasing perceptions of personal risk and harmfulness of engaging in specific unhealthy practices and behaviors

Love Notes takes a pro-active asset-building approach that focuses on reinforcing protective factors. Within this approach, there is serious attention to increasing youth’s awareness of personal risk factors and harmfulness of engaging in unhealthy practices and behaviors. As noted in #2 above, *Love Notes* take a holistic approach to health knowledge and goals that contribute to health-promoting decisions and behaviors.

Lesson 4 – Attractions and Starting Relationships

Deepen awareness of characteristics and building blocks of healthy relationships and the risks of rapid involvement before knowing if they are present; create awareness of the body’s chemistry (i.e. the increase of neurotransmitters and hormones) when one is strongly attracted to another and how it affects perceptions of personal risks and engaging in risky behaviors; reinforces protective factors by offering a strategy for how to enjoy the “chemistry” of initial attraction while decreasing the risk of engaging in unhealthy practices and behaviors.

Lesson 5 – Principles of Smart Relationships

Present research-based principles for healthy relationships—what to be aware of/what to find out about a person one is attracted to; develop a more realistic concept of love.

Lesson 6 – Is It a Healthy Relationship?

Offers a clear framework for recognizing and analyzing healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; develops a deeper understanding of reasons for why many youthful relationships break up/explore better and worse ways to break up/ offer insights on how to move forward after a breakup in a healthful way.

Focuses on reinforcing protective factors and increasing perceptions of personal risk and harmfulness of engaging in specific unhealthy practices and behaviors (continued)

Lesson 7 – Dangerous Love

Build knowledge of red flags; the various forms abuse can take; clarify what's sexual assault/what is consent; signs and process of grooming for sex trafficking; identify where and how to access reliable information, support, and service.

Lesson 8 – Decide, Don't Slide! Pathways & Sequences Towards Success

Build awareness of the benefits of making clear decisions vs. sliding into intimate connections—from the smallest to the larger ones; create awareness of the outcomes of various pathways towards successful adulthood.

Lesson 9 – Communication and Healthy Relationships

Patterns research has identified that harm relationships; the skills research has identified that are helpful to reduce harmful patterns.

Lesson 10 – Communication Challenges and More Skills Hidden issues that may lie behind conflict; a deep dive into benefits and risks of digital technology on relationships and sexual decision-making, and social, emotional and mental health, with a goal of encouraging young people to develop their own personal policy for engagement with this technology.

Lesson 11 – Let's Talk About Sex

Solicit and explore ideas for what may make sex a positive experience; importance of mutuality for any level of intimate involvement; awareness of sexual response cycle; benefits of making clear decisions versus the emotional risks of sliding quickly into intimate involvement & not being on the same page with a partner; risks of online sharing of explicit images; issues around digital consent; re-imagining a definition of safe sex.

Lesson 12 – Let's Plan for Choices.

Knowledge of facts vs myths surrounding sex, STIs/HIV, pregnancy; comprehensive information on contraception (including EC) and correct vs. incorrect condom use; comprehensive knowledge of STIs/HIV—transmission, symptoms, potential consequences, prevention/treatments; where to access reliable health services and support; build knowledge of the realities of the mainstream porn industry and potential impacts on youthful users.

4. Addresses personal values, attitudes, and beliefs

Love Notes encourages youth in numerous places and ways on identifying personal values, attitudes, and beliefs. *Love Notes* explores through activities how they may detract from, or contribute to, reaching what is important to them for their lives and future.

Lesson 1 – Relationships Today

Defining a vision for my future—for education, career, relationships, sexual choices.

Lesson 2 – Knowing Yourself

Personality style—identifying and strengthening my positives/taming my extremes; how it may impact relationships; analyzing past experiences—how they may have had a positive or negative impact on a person’s current attitudes, beliefs and behaviors; identify the patterns one wants for their future—what to take, leave behind and work to change.

Lesson 3 – My Expectations – My Future

Identify qualities and characteristics important to me in friends/partners; clarify my expectations in key areas of relationships; deepen my understanding of maturity and character—how it affects one’s values, beliefs and behaviors. Assess & identify my own growth challenges with respect to maturity and character.

Lesson 4 – Attractions and Starting Relationships

Brainstorm-my values/beliefs as to what makes a great relationship.

Lesson 11 – Let’s Talk About Sex

Identify my sexual values (i.e., the meaning, context, and desired pacing) I want for any level of deepening physical/sexual intimacy with another.

Lesson 13 – Through the Eyes of a Child.

What I believe a child might need or want/what I’d want for my/any child; my values on what being a good father is.

5. Uses strategies designed to engage students

The activities in *Love Notes* are varied including drawing, sculpting, peer-to-peer teaching, youth-generated multi-media messages, games, role-plays, skill-practice, music, stories, narratives, video clips and more. The activities make use of real-life situations/scenarios that young people can relate to. They were written by, and with, a diverse and inclusive array of young people and are continually updated. We encourage teachers to solicit new scenarios from youth to add to or replace what is offered. The activities are designed to reinforce the knowledge and concepts and offer practice with the skills taught to put knowledge into action. The purpose of activities is to spark brainstorming and discussion to foster personal reflection, decision-making and strengthen communication abilities.

The **Love Notes Journal**, which is private, is a vital component of the program as it allows a young person to apply the knowledge and skills to their own life. The Journal is meant to encourage youth to clarify their values and expectations, to assist in self-assessment, decision-making, and for laying down intentions and real step-by-step plans that will contribute to health-promoting decisions and behaviors for their present and future lives.

6. Addresses social pressures and influences

Love Notes addresses social pressures and influences that may lead into unhealthy relationships and behaviors. The program addresses new forms of pressures and influences of the digital world, including the influence of mainstream pornography on teens. *Love Notes* also teaches consent and drawing personal lines of respect.

Lesson 6—How Healthy Is the Relationship.

Raises awareness of subtle and overt pressures or threats from partner to stay in a destructive relationship.

Lesson 7 – Dangerous Love

Video of stories of pressures and influences regarding unsafe/unhealthy relationships; newer forms of digital abuse/control; clarifies what consent is/isn't; influence of drugs/alcohol in decision-making and behaviors; awareness of process of grooming of vulnerable youth; positive examples of youth “drawing the line of respect”, i.e., what respect looks like in the real world in terms of intimate relationships.

Lesson 9 – Communication and Healthy Relationships. Examine the influence of communication patterns experienced growing up; social pressures on youth and relationships in the digital age.

<p>Addresses social pressures and influences (continued)</p>	<p>Lesson 10—Communication Challenges and More Skills. Examine how past experiences (hidden issues) may influence current issues on may have; explore the potential impacts of digital technology on relationships, communication, social and emotional development, and mental health.</p> <p>Lesson 11 – Let’s Talk About Sex. Examine contemporary cultural influences on various contexts in which sex occur, i.e., casual, relational, with a goal of encouraging youth to define a personally- meaningful context for themselves; pressures/influences on navigating relationships in the digital world.</p> <p>Lesson 12 – Let’s Plan for Choices. Explore potential influence of heavy viewing of mainstream pornography on teen sexual behaviors.</p>
<p>7. Builds personal competence, social competence, and self-efficacy by addressing skills</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p>8. Provides opportunities to reinforce skills and positive health behaviors</p>	<p><i>Love Notes</i> empowers youth with the skills needed to further their own personal development, to form and maintain healthy relationships, to make wise sexual decisions, and to engage in protective behaviors for their sexual choices and future lives. <i>Love Notes’</i> skills-based approach aims to build confidence and capacity to follow through with intentions. It encourages young people to set goals and to work towards success holistically. <i>Love Notes</i> breaks skills down into small steps, provides opportunities to deeply reflect, to self-assess, to discuss, to gather information, to make decisions, and to practice, practice, practice.</p> <p>Below is a listing of many of the skill-building in-class activities as well as personal applications in the Journal.</p> <p>Lesson 1 – Relationships Today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Choosing Reds or Greens?</i> The role of skills to assist in health-promoting personal decisions. • <i>Myself—My Future:</i> Identify goals, as well as positive steps to take to move towards them. Identify current behaviors that might get in the way of reaching one’s goals. <p>Lesson 2—Knowing Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Style Inventory and personal steps one can take to strengthen their positives and tame their extremes in interactions at school/work and in relationships (friends, family, romantic). • Sorting Baggage activity—practice in recognizing influence of negative and positive experiences, attitudes, behaviors.

Builds personal
competence, social
competence, and self-
efficacy by addressing
skills (continued)

AND

Provides opportunities
to reinforce skills and
positive health
behaviors (continued)

- Personal analysis of past patterns. Identify patterns that have been helpful and those wanting to work to change.
- Music video & discussion

Lesson—3 My Expectations—My Future

- What's Important to Me? identify top 3 must have's & top 3's could-not-accept characteristics in a friend/partner.
- Clarify one's own relationship expectations, and practice communicating them. (activity: Reasonable or Unreasonable? & Journal)
- Maturity & Character self-assessment. (Identify growth challenges)

Lesson 4 – Attraction and Starting Relationships

- Relationship Pyramid activity—brainstorm qualities of good relationships and collaborative activity to build a healthy relationship
- Glitter demonstration on chemistry of attraction
- Infatuation/Love Match game—build insight for decision-making

Lesson 5—Principles of Smart Relationships

- Activity: Thumbs Up or Down?
- Activity: Identify key components of healthy relationships in real life scenarios
- Identify and apply the principles to one's own life.
- Activity: What side is missing?
- Love Advisor activity

Lesson 6—How Healthy is the Relationship?

- Sculpture activity on healthy vs. unhealthy relationships
- Personal application/assessment of one's relationships
- Activity: Fun Ideas brainstorm & competition
- Breaking Up activities: Is it time? Worst ways brainstorm; Tips for how-to and staying safe; Tips on moving forward.
- Music video discussion

Lesson 7 – Dangerous Love

- Activity: Red Flags –builds skills in recognizing early warnings and abusive behaviors
- Video & discussion
- Video & discussion on sexual assault & skill building on practicing consent

Builds personal
competence, social
competence, and self-
efficacy by addressing
skills (continued)

AND

Provides opportunities
to reinforce skills and
positive health
behaviors (continued)

- Activity: Draw the Line of Respect practice and how to access info & support regarding dating violence, sexual assault and sexual trafficking.

Lesson 8 – Decide, Don’t Slide! Pathways & Sequences Towards Success

- Activity: High-cost Slides and do-over opportunities
- Activity: Making Decisions/Identify information helpful to make those decisions

Lesson 9 – Communication and Healthy Relationships

- Activity: Communication Danger Signs—skill building in recognizing them
- Activity: Relationship Checkup Quiz (self-assessment)
- Demonstration & Video on anger and the brain
- Skill practice in using the Time Out skill
- Skill practice with the Speaker Listener Technique
- Activity: Identify Communication Patterns Experienced growing up & decision-making about which to take or leave behind and work to change.

Lesson 10 – Communication Challenges and More Skills

- Skill activity: Practice with the *WWW strategy* for voicing complaints, and appreciations
- Skill activity: Practice with how to employ “*gentle starts*” in raising issues
- Activity: Identify potential *hidden issues* underlying conflict
- Skill activity: Practice with a 4-part *problem-solving* model

Lesson 11- Let’s Talk About Sex

- Activity: Analyze a real-life relationship on several dimensions of intimacy
- Activity: Analyze one’s own relationships (*How Connected?*)
- View and discuss teen written video with scenarios involving sexual decision-making
- Conversations for *Getting On the Same Page*: Practice in answering key questions for oneself regarding expectations around sexual involvement. These expectations will be useful to share with a present or future partner to discern if both people are on the same page.
- Practice: *Pacing My Relationship* (Intentional practice with setting a personally meaningful line for oneself and elaborating one’s values about it. Also, practice in identifying

Builds personal competence, social competence, and self-efficacy by addressing skills (continued)

AND

Provides opportunities to reinforce skills and positive health behaviors (continued)

the benefits and risks of where one sets their line; and, when or under what conditions they'd consider moving their line.

Lesson 12 – Let's Plan for Choices

- *Test Your Sex Smarts*: skill-building in separating facts from myths
- *Peer-to-Peer Teach-in on STIs/HIV*: Build skills in teaching peers about STIs/HIV in engaging ways by creating their own multi-media tools to convey vital information.
- Practice accessing CDC website for finding free, fast, confidential STI/HIV testing
- *My Personal Plan*: Laying down intentional plans for following through on protective and health-promoting behaviors for one's personal sexual choices. Practice with communicating one's plans/intentions.
- *Pressure Situations Role-plays*: practice with assertiveness skills responding to pressure situations

9. Addresses individual and group norms that support health-enhancing behaviors

Love Notes supports health-enhancing behaviors and addresses group norms such as the bystander effect, helping a friend who is danger, STIs, domestic violence warning signs, healthy break-ups, decision-making, digital relationships, and more are discussed.

Lesson 6: Is it a Healthy Relationship?

- Tips for friends on breaking up and moving forward

Lesson 7 – Dangerous Love:

- Helping Friends (Worried About a Friend)

Lesson 8 – Decide, Don't Slide! Pathways & Sequences Towards Success:

- High-cost Slides activity: Students create "do-overs" to promote health-enhancing behaviors

Lesson 10 – Communication Challenges and More Skills

- Explore norms and behaviors involving digital technology—identify personal standards for one's use of digital technology that support health-enhancing behaviors.

<p>Addresses individual and group norms that support health-enhancing behaviors</p>	<p>Lesson 11 – Let’s Talk About Sex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore cultural, digital, and peer pressures surrounding contemporary contexts for sex (relational, casual, hookup culture), influence of social media, issues of sexually explicit online sharing, digital consent and more. <p>Lesson 12 – Let’s Plan for Choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure situation role-plays
<p>10. Provides age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate information, learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials</p>	<p><i>Love Notes</i> is meant to be taught to young people aged 14-24. All the lessons in <i>Love Notes</i> are age-appropriate. The teachers have the freedom to edit each PowerPoint slide for images and cultural adaptations as needed.</p> <p>Research shows students learn best with active engagement with material they can relate to; by gaining functional knowledge that deepens understanding and motivates behavioral change. Most importantly students learn best with active learning strategies—activities to put knowledge to work in real and various ways such as to set goals, elaborate steps to move towards goals, to make choices/decisions, analyze influences, define values, learn how to access reliable information and very importantly, acquire skills and practice, practice, practice with them. This approach builds a youth’s confidence and sense of self-efficacy.</p>
<p>11. Incorporates learning strategies, teaching methods, and materials that are culturally inclusive</p>	<p>All youth, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status have attractions, emotions and desires for healthy relationships. All youth need skills and knowledge to navigate their relationships and to engage in healthful decisions and behaviors. <i>Love Notes</i> was created with diverse representations of youth in the curriculum language, scenarios, media, and images.</p> <p>The activities included in <i>Love Notes</i> have been designed to be inclusive. The scenarios, poetry, and stories have been written by diverse youth. The images in the PowerPoint slides, as well as language in the lessons and scenarios, are inclusive of diverse youth, and are updated periodically. However, we encourage users of <i>Love Note</i> to adapt, add and/or delete images, examples, scenarios, media, as needed for their audience/setting. <i>Love Notes</i> is flexible and customizable.</p>

12. Provides opportunities to make positive connections with influential others

Trusted Adult Connection (TAC) activities are provided for each lesson in the *Love Notes* curriculum. This component is considered to be essential to the effectiveness of *Love Notes*.

Teen connectedness to parent(s) or other trusted adults is one of the most powerful protective factors for youth that research has found.

The TAC activities are designed to provide conversation starters and knowledge-sharing to nurture support and connection between each young person participating in the program and their parent and/or a trusted adult.

Each TAC activity conveys core concepts, provides talking points, and uses an easy activity to engage conversation between youth and adult. It's a way to review, share, and apply what is being learned. Lesson content also offers opportunities for instructors to connect youth with community resources.

13. Includes teacher information and plans for professional development and training that enhance effectiveness of instruction and student learning

Training for the *Love Notes* program helps instructors deliver the material with fidelity and to better meet the needs of the students in the room. Dibble Training Specialists (who all have extensive experience providing direct programming to youth) provide a highly interactive, in-depth experience.

Training will help instructors to advance their facilitation skills and build their confidence and competence in dealing with sensitive issues in the classroom.

Additionally, each lesson is written with extensive notes, background information, and step-by-step instructions to build the knowledge and skills of the instructor.

14. Provides adequate time for instruction and learning

The lessons in *Love Notes* are flexible and adaptable for every audience. Lessons may be shortened, added to, and adapted to fit time and session constraints. Each lesson is mapped out with timing for each section, discussion, and activity, to make this process simpler. There are 13 lessons—taking approximately 13 hours. The Dibble Institute offers technical support in customizing.

**15. Is research based
and theory driven**

In a five-year large scale federally funded random control trial of *Love Notes EBP*, researchers at the University of Louisville, found that youth in the *Love Notes* group were 46% less likely to get pregnant compared to the control group, had fewer sexual partners, decrease sexual initiation and sexual activity, while increasing contraceptive use and consistency. Read [the latest peer reviewed article](#) on the study in *Family Relations*, 2022: 1-20 (put in hyperlink) as well as [Issue Brief](#) and the [Office of Adolescent Health's report](#).

Rather than focusing on what to avoid, *Love Notes* builds assets and appeals to aspirations. Using a strengths-based approach, it offers young people new conceptual frameworks and skills to help them make informed decisions instead of *sliding* into unplanned behaviors that can derail their lives.

Its theory of change (theory of planned behavior) hypothesizes that to advance health-promoting sexual decisions and behaviors we must take a more holistic approach. Interventions must build young people's skills for cultivating healthy selves, healthy relationships, and healthy sexual decision-making, planning, and behaviors. The focus should be on a young person's present life as well as on their future life goals.

Love Notes includes the evidence-based content alongside supplemental materials that allow facilitators to go deeper on topics that are meaningful to young people, including pregnant and parenting teens.