



NY Times Bites off More than It Can Skew

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Fake news is alive and well -- and thriving on the pages of America's biggest newspapers. No wonder more people are [tuning out the media](#). They don't trust it. And outlets like the New York Times aren't giving them any reason to try.

At some point, the Times's editorial board must have gotten together and decided to reprint every lie ever told about abstinence education. The result was [May 5th's work of fiction](#), a breathtakingly dishonest, 602-word crime scene of journalism that justifies America's growing distrust of the press. About the only thing that was accurate about the column was its placement: on the opinion page, where it can't be passed off as legitimate news.

Still, the editors' agenda was obvious – discrediting a sex-ed approach that's popular, effective, and grossly underfunded. They barely got the byline in before the absurdities began, starting with the Times's insistence that HHS is somehow "advancing an anti-science, ideological agenda" by trying to level the funding field for abstinence. "The department last year prematurely ended grants to some teen pregnancy prevention programs, claiming weak evidence of success. More recently, it set new funding rules that favor an abstinence-only approach," they complain.

If anyone's ignoring science, it's the Times. Barack Obama's own HHS admitted outright that his contraception-first strategy was a [billion-dollar failure](#). More than *80 percent of the students in his programs* fared either worse or no better than their peers. Hardly the stuff of "weak evidence." According to the last administration, Obama's approach was a disaster -- resulting in more pregnancies, more sexual initiation, and more oral sex¹.

Not surprisingly, the Trump administration doesn't think programs that encourage pregnancy are the wisest use of federal funds. So it rewrote the rules, shifting a very modest amount of money (10 cents of every sex-ed dollar) to the strategy the CDC agrees is working. But even now, HHS's

investment in abstinence isn't close to what the Times's preferred programs are getting. Liberal sex-ed still rakes in about \$980 million, compared to \$100 million for sexual risk avoidance (SRA). Even with the president's changes, that's still about a 10:1 ratio in favor of programs that [taxpayers don't want](#) – and more importantly, don't work!

The editors claim that "The administration's approach defies all common sense. There is no good evidence that abstinence-only education prevents or delays young people from having sex, leads them to have fewer sexual partners, or reduces rates of teen pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections." Did the Times fire all of its fact-checkers? The CDC [blew that myth to bits in 2016](#), explaining that not only does the abstinence message work -- it positively affects every area of kids' lives. "High school students who are virgins rate significantly and consistently better in nearly all health-related behaviors and measures than their sexually active peers." That includes everything from "bike helmet and seat belt use to substance abuse, diet, doctor's visits, exercise, and even tanning bed use."

Abstinence education is like one-stop shopping for healthier behavior.

Unfortunately, the Left is too beholden to its culture of permissiveness to listen. For some of them, it's self-indulgence at all costs -- so much so that they're willing to help kids off a cliff that leads to teen pregnancy and everything that comes with it: [financial hardship](#), [school failure](#), and [depression](#). They refuse to treat sex like every other risk behavior and discourage it. And ironically, that's what teenagers want.

In a survey of 18- and 19-year-olds, the Barna Group found that what kids care about is learning how to "understand healthy and unhealthy relationships (65 percent), avoiding sexual assault (64 percent), how alcohol impairs judgment (61 percent), and how to say 'no' to sex without losing a relationship (57 percent)." They're relationship-driven, not sex obsessed. Most of them agree that today's curriculum pressures them too much to have sex. And those who've given in [regret it](#). They don't think lessons on sexual pleasuring (26 percent) are nearly as important as having the skills to say "no" (63 percent).

That's another thing the editors misjudge: teenagers' desire to wait. "[G]iven that almost all Americans engage in premarital sex," they argue, "this vision of an abstinent-outside-of-marriage world simply at odds with reality." That's ridiculous. All Americans don't engage in premarital sex – and certainly all teenagers don't. Even the Washington Post points out just [how](#)

[sharply teen sex is declining](#). Would you believe that about 60 percent of teens haven't had sex? Most Americans are surprised to hear it – thanks in part to the misinformation campaigns of newspapers like this one. Once they know, [Republicans, Democrats, and everyone in between](#) agree: it's time to teach abstinence.

And the Trump administration is listening. They're pursuing a bipartisan, evidence-based approach -- which is more than I can say for the New York Times.

References: [1] Office of Adolescent Health (2016), *Summary of Findings from the TPP Program Grantees (FY2010-2014)*. Washington, D.C.: HHS. Special issue of *American Journal of Public Health*, September 2016. 106 (S1):29-S15.

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