

Alignment of Building Protective Factors with the REAL Essential Advance Curriculum

Protective Factor	REAL Essentials Advance Alignment	Aligned Activities
<p>1. Positive connections to supportive adults</p>	<p>REAL Essentials curriculum partners with parents* as the primary health educators of their children. Parents should build strong relationships with their children and talk to them about healthy relationships, sex and their expectations for behavior. Parents are the first and best resource for helping youth make healthy decisions. Multiple studies concur that parental engagement and monitoring are protective factors regarding high risk behaviors. There is some evidence that parental attitudes and beliefs influence adolescent's intent to delay sex. Parental involvement is also key to reducing other risk behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use, which often affect adolescents' decisions about sexual activity. Parents who develop a strong relationship with their children also have a positive impact on academic achievement. The need for parental involvement is further reinforced by adolescent attitudes, because most teens want to obtain information about relationships, expectations, and sex from their parents. Research reveals that parents are more likely to talk to their children about sex and about delaying sexual activity when provided with direction and information. REAL Essentials has many lessons that have a "Connect at Home" component, involving parents in the dialogue. REAL Essentials programming has a robust parent outreach and educational component to foster parent/child support and education.</p> <p>*caregivers or trusted adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission Slip • Where are your boundaries? (p. 227) • Influence of Alcohol and Drugs (p. 199) • A Distorted View (p. 213) • Asset Assessment (p. 57) • Connect at Home Assignments Throughout curriculum
<p>2. Youth engagement</p>	<p>All activities are designed for youth engagement and participation in the learning objectives. REAL Essentials certified instructors are trained to provide a safe and inclusive environment, so all students feel valued and part of the classroom experience. Teachers report that when a REAL Essentials speaker is in the classroom, the high-risk often disconnected students who have frequent episodes of truancy are in attendance for the time the speaker is scheduled. Teachers also report that these same students are participatory, engaged, captivated by the relevant and positive programming and are not disrupting the classroom and the other students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundaries are Your Friend (p. 223) • Setting Boundaries Early (p. 225) • Peer Pressure Pull Down (p. 215) • Peer Pressure Suck an Egg (p. 217) • Obstacles to Success: Fact or Fiction (p. 205)

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3. Healthy relationships

The eight units of the REAL Essentials curriculum are focused on research-aligned relationship development skills. Self-discovery, communication and conflict resolution skills, decision making, being mindful and intentional, safe dating skills, partner selection strategies, relationship red flags, the meaning of love and commitment, boundary setting, asking for what you need, learning about the importance of expectations, relationship attachment, importance of friendship, and many other skills to build healthy relationships are included in the curriculum. REAL Essentials utilizes the whole person approach teaching about personal relationships from a physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial dimension of health. It teaches the science of healthy relationship development identifying qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. The program teaches effective communication and conflict resolution skills as well as the prevention of assault, coercion, and intimate partner violence. REAL Essentials also directs students regarding consent laws and boundary setting.

- Personal Relationships:
- Personality Styles (p. 27)
 - Basic Needs of the Heart (p. 39)
 - How Do You Feel Loved? (p. 45)
 - Effective Communication & Barriers to It (p. 99)
 - Communicating Effectively/Resolving Conflict (p. 113)
 - Friendship, Dating and Love (p. 131)
 - What Love Looks Like (p. 147) Foundations of a Healthy Relationship (p. 155)
 - Relationship Red Flags (p. 163) Preventing Sexual Assault (p. 169)
 - Communicating Consent (p. 175)

4. Self-regulation and self-control

Self-regulation and self-control are precursors to increased self-esteem. Throughout the REAL Essentials curriculum there are references to being mindful, intentional, not letting feelings dictate behavior, or focusing on deciding rather than sliding into behaviors. Self-efficacy is the capacity to demonstrate self-respect and practice self-protective behaviors, even in difficult situations. REAL Essentials curriculum helps students recognize their personal worth, their gifts, talents, their passion and purpose, thus improving critical thinking, communication, conflict resolution, and refusal skills. Elements of the REAL Essentials lessons include building social, emotional, and cognitive competence. The ability to establish and maintain personal boundaries is part of the competency to avoid sexual activity, whether that means resisting sexual coercion or avoiding sexually charged situations. A particularly efficacious approach to build personal competencies is a positive youth development framework, where youth are engaged in interpersonal skill-building, social engagement, taught healthy relationship skills, given a safe space, and given positive norms and expectations. REAL Essentials accomplishes this through helping students and parents discover their assets and resiliency factors utilizing the positive youth development work of the late Dr. Peter Benson at the Search Institute. The ability to establish and maintain personal boundaries, ask for what they need, and communicate feelings, are part of the REAL Essentials suite of activities to develop and enhance self-regulation and self-control.

- Healthy People Ask (p. 103)
- Emotional Needs (p. 49)
- Communicating Feelings (p. 109)
- Communication and Resolving Conflict (p. 113)
- Navigating Differences (p. 75)
- Feelings vs. Behavior Train (p. 107)
- Life Plan (p. 233)
- Making Healthy Decisions (p. 251)
- Overcoming Potential Obstacles (p. 255)
- Rise Above Risk (p. 261)
- My Commitments (p. 387)
- Refusal Skills (p. 267)
- Asset Assessment (p. 57)
- Ideas for Building Assets (p. 63)
- Relationship Red Flags (p. 163)
- Break-up Skills (p. 167)
- Preventing Sexual Assault (p. 169)
- Preventing bullying and violence (p. 179)

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5. Sense of purpose and positive view of future

REAL Essentials lessons help students explore their attitudes, beliefs and values in a safe, affirming climate of learning and discovery. Lessons outline and highlight the value of having a sense of purpose and passion teaching toward the positive and hopeful, rather than away from the negative. Additionally, REAL Essentials programming has:

- Defined desired outcomes
- The value of high expectations
- Teach content that is relevant and familiar to the students
- Present the information in an innovative and compelling manner often surprising, engaging and captivating students which realigns their values and beliefs and they become hopeful for a life full of purpose, passion and success.

Goal setting and future vision plays a powerful role in motivating healthy adolescent decisions. REAL Essentials lessons create an opportunity for students to identify viable, attractive options for their future and their relationships. Students who hope to find a life-partner and someday marry will understand the data for building a framework to support healthy commitments. High educational aspirations help provide focus for avoidance of high-risk cluster behaviors, while lower educational expectations increase the odds that teens will participate in high-risk activities. Teens who perceive limited life/career options may view early parenting less negatively or even as an alternate life course. REAL Essentials targets future goals and opportunities throughout the curriculum. The “success sequence” is highlighted as an important part of future orientation. This sequence provides a protective factor against poverty, noting that if students 1) graduate from high school; 2) maintain a full-time job; and 3) marry before having children, they will have less than a 2% chance of ending up in poverty. Creating a new life script for high-risk youth who have experienced generational poverty is a strategy to end this cycle.

- What is your passion and purpose?
- Boundaries are Your Friend (p. 223)
- Setting Boundaries Early (p. 225)
- Peer Pressure Pull Down (p. 215)
- Peer Pressure Suck an Egg (p. 217)
- Obstacles to Success: Fact or Fiction (p.205)
- Assets and resiliency
- Success Sequencing (p. 239)
- Leadership and Job Readiness (p. 315)
- Future Orientation (p. 231)
- Life Plan (p. 233)
- Hopes and Dreams (p. 237)
- Discovering Your Passion and Purpose (p. 71)
- Creating My Life Plan; the Road to Success (p. 243)
- Overcoming Potential Obstacles (p. 255)
- Finding the Love of My Life (p. 287)
- Dreaming of the Future (p. 301)
- Mock Wedding Ceremony (p. 311)
- Marriage, It's Good Stuff (p. 307)

6. Connection with family and caregivers

REAL Essentials outlines how important healthy relationships and supportive connections are to optimal health and well-being. In the curriculum there are several references to the importance of this in the literature. REAL Essential includes several activities that include family members and caregivers which strengthens familial bonds.

- Healthy communication skills (p. 99)
- Building assets (p.63)
- Dealing effectively with conflict (p. 112)
- Learning your parents' personality traits (p.27)
- Learning your parents' love language (p.45)
- Setting Boundaries Early (p.227)
- Parent teen connection activities throughout the curriculum.

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7. Parental involvement and monitoring

Teenagers who date early, often, and steadily are more likely to have earlier sexual encounters. In addition, participating in unsupervised activities, and dating older partners, are consistently associated with higher rates of drug and alcohol use, sexual activity and dating violence. Substance use is a noted risk factor, and activities targeting both these issues should include promotion of social and emotional competence, parenting skills training, parent engagement, and family support. REAL Essentials lessons acknowledge the role of high-risk situations that place teens in vulnerable situations, identifies these situations, promotes insights for students, and addresses how to mitigate these factors. Teens who have been sexually active then become more aware of vulnerable situations and develop personal strategies to avoid these opportunities. REAL Essentials utilizes "Connect at Home" lessons throughout the curriculum to engage parents and trusted adults. Building parental support, engaging adolescents in the community, and the availability of shared and safe activities are important protective factors. In the REAL Essentials Certification Training the Master Trainer outlines ways to create a supportive, healthy community for which to utilize curriculum content in a variety of settings REAL Essentials includes sections that are designed to foster parental engagement and monitoring of the children. There is an entire section dedicated to imparting ideas for parents to be able to build the 40 developmental assets in their children.

- Parent workshops associated with the curriculum.
- Connect at home activities with parents throughout the curriculum.

8. Family beliefs and attitudes

REAL Essentials includes sections that are designed to foster parental engagement and monitoring of the children as well as having a common language regarding family beliefs and attitudes that is nonsectarian and unites us in the human family. There is an entire section in REAL Essentials dedicated to imparting common ideas for parents to be able to build the 40 developmental assets in their children which will increase the likelihood that children who have high numbers of assets avoid any high-risk behaviors including, but not limited to, early sexual debut.

- Building assets in your children (p.63)

9. Environments supportive of healthy behaviors

The Center for Relationship Education is committed to training high numbers of educators, parents, community leaders, youth serving agency personnel and medical professionals in REAL Essentials, By training and certifying a cadre of people in the community that all desire healthy outcomes for youth in that community, the surrounding area now have a community saturation approach utilizing a common language. This creates an environment of supportive healthy behaviors for the child residing in that community.

Creating a community saturation approach to support students with environments that endorse and increase the likelihood of healthy behaviors and healthy choices of children and adults in the community.

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10. Connections to schools, neighborhoods, organizations and communities

REAL Essentials utilizes a positive youth development approach which builds on young people's strengths, helping them cultivate their talents, increase feelings of self-worth, and use the confidence and skills they gain to make positive, healthy decisions and be connected to their schools, neighborhood, organizations and community. By providing physical safety, psychological safety, appropriate structure, modeling of pro-social behavior, supportive relationships with adults and peers, and exciting hopeful opportunities for a meaningful positive future, all students gain a sense of belonging. The REAL Essentials curriculum advocates young people see themselves in the larger context of being an integral part of the human family. The curriculum lessons empower them and give them a sense of purpose and an attitude of service. Certified educators are encouraged to provide service-learning experiences for the adolescents they are reaching and teaching in order to give them the opportunity to practice the relationship skills they have learned. Many high-risk, vulnerable adolescents are disengaged or disconnected from their families, peers, community or school. The goal of the REAL Essentials curriculum is to ensure that the activities are relevant interesting and useful, and deal with issues of the heart. This attention to our common humanity increases the likelihood that all participants form a connection with each other in the classes. REAL Essentials classroom climate and management training provides a safe place to explore and address challenges of disconnected or marginalized youth.

REAL Essentials supports service-learning projects, sports activities, and after school programs. CRE attempts to train as many facilitators in a community so everywhere the adolescent spends time, they feel connected and supported with healthy, positive youth development messaging and hope for a positive future.