



Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs (TAC)

(TAC) 17 Characteristics

REAL Essentials Advance Alignment

Aligned Activities

CATEGORY 1 The Process of Developing the Curriculum

1. Involved multiple people with different backgrounds in theory, research and sex and STD/HIV education to develop the curriculum.

REAL Essentials (RE) developers involved experts in the field of medicine, public health, primary prevention, and behavioral health in the development of the curriculum. Additional developments utilized scientific best practices and literature sources to frame content regarding STD/HIV prevention.

Not applicable for this category

2. Assessed relevant needs and assets of target group.

Community data sets and health reports directed the developers in understanding the trends and needs in diverse and high-risk communities before finalizing programs. Community-based partners were pursued for input and expertise to be sensitive to each population group with cultural relevance regarding content and language. The REAL Essentials Trainer of Trainer model of service delivery allows community experts to deliver messaging to best serve the target group from a posture of cultural understanding, risks of population group, linguistic relevance, understanding and expertise.

Not applicable for this category

3. Used a logic model approach to develop the curriculum that specified the health goals, the behaviors affecting those health goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviors, and the activities addressing those risk and protective factors.

All REAL Essentials curricula were developed utilizing a logic model approach, beginning with target population and outlining measurable outcomes for both the short and long-term prevention strategies for STDS/HIV. Additionally, the evaluation components allow educators to measure and assess outcomes to ensure program fidelity, intensity and duration of implementation and evidence-based practices.

Not applicable for this category

(TAC)
17 Characteristics

REAL Essentials
Advance Alignment

Aligned
Activities

CATEGORY 1
The Process of Developing the Curriculum

4. **Designed activities consistent with community values and available resources (e.g., staff time, staff skills, facility space and supplies).**

REAL Essentials developers began the curricula design process with interviews and focus groups assessing needs and risk factors in communities requiring services. This information and data was translated into age-appropriate and medically-accurate constructs, each field-tested in classrooms and adapted for impact and outcomes.

Not applicable for this category

5. **Pilot-tested the program.**

HHS funding provided an opportunity for a community saturation approach (also known as the socio-ecological model of prevention education) service delivery system to test results in a high-need county. After a 5-year demonstration project, this county realized a 22% reduction of teen pregnancy. This robust pilot opportunity allowed developers to consider changes and adaptations that would further improve outcomes.

Not applicable for this category

6. **Focused clearly on at least one of three health goals – the prevention of STD, HIV and/or pregnancy.**

REAL Essentials programming clearly focuses on all 3 health goals: STD prevention, HIV prevention, and pregnancy prevention as well as social emotional wellness and self-efficacy.

Lessons:

- Sexually Transmitted Disease and Infections (p. 371)
- HIV Fact/Fiction (p. 373)
- A Positive Test (p. 377)

CATEGORY 2
The Contents of the Curriculum Itself

7. **Focused narrowly on specific behaviors leading to these health goals (e.g., abstaining from sex or using condoms or other contraceptives), gave clear messages about these behaviors, and addressed situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them.**

REAL Essentials is clear and concrete to appeal to the adolescent brain and utilizes directive teaching strategies for achieving the aforementioned health goals and engages students with real life examples to practice and experience success when applying refusal skills.

Lessons:

- Relationship Red Flags (p. 163)
- Rising Above Risk (p. 261)
- Refusal Skills (p. 267)

(TAC)
17 Characteristics

REAL Essentials
Advance Alignment

Aligned
Activities

8. Addressed multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors (e.g., knowledge, perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms and self-efficacy).

REAL Essentials addresses multiple sexual risk factors by utilizing a positive youth development approach building protective factors, resiliency and character qualities such as impulse control, emotional regulation, future orientation strategies and, at the same time, teaches the skills necessary to avoid risk, substitute unhealthy behaviors for healthy ones and captivates the heart and mind of the student. Lessons are engaging, relevant, skills-based and address attitudes, knowledge and behavioral intent.

- Lessons:*
- The Meaning of Sex (p. 335)
 - What Does your Picture Look Like? (p. 349)

9. Created a safe social environment for youth to participate.

REAL Essentials is inclusive to all students creating norms and agreements with students prior to programming delivery. These norms foster kindness, respect, emotional and intellectual safety, a trauma informed approach to not trigger or additionally traumatize those students who have had adverse experiences. REAL Essentials utilizes humor and fun interactive experiential activities to build trust and healthy relationships among the learners, modeling pro-social behaviors.

- Lessons:*
- A Safe Learning Environment (p. viii)

10. Included multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.

The REAL Essentials suite of curricula is known for the sizable number of activities imparting skills to reduce targeted risk factors and increasing protective factors. The programming is flexible, and educators have the ability to modulate lessons by topic. This allows them to teach multiple concepts in a variety of ways that engage and captivate the students, breaking down and operationalizing each concept so students are able to demonstrate and articulate the skills necessary to choose healthy behaviors.

**(TAC)
17 Characteristics**

**REAL Essentials
Advance Alignment**

**Aligned
Activities**

CATEGORY 2
The Contents of the Curriculum Itself

11. Employed instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved the participants, that helped participants personalize the information, and that were designed to change each group of risk and protective factors.

REAL Essentials utilizes concepts that increase inner locus of control recognizing that behavior change happens most effectively when students operate from intrinsic motivation. This means they have the capacity to personalize the information which is relevant to them and apply it in their life in a way that is meaningful and helpful enabling them to be successful and healthy.

- Intrinsic motivation approach and teaching methods (p. viii)

12. Employed activities, instructional methods and behavioral messages that were appropriate to the youths' culture, developmental age and sexual experience.

The REAL Essentials Suite of curricula utilizes multiple teaching methodologies that captivate and engage students who learn differently. Activities are designed to be relevant, addressing youth culture and developmental age. Research regarding teen brain development is employed as a strategy to design lessons that are concrete rather than abstract, thus teaching the stages of developmental brain pathways, cognitive reasoning and decision making.

13. Covered topics in a logical sequence.

REAL Essentials Curriculum Units begin with self-discovery, advance toward impact on others and end with future orientation, life mapping and visioning for success.

- Unit Titles:*
- 1 - Learning About Yourself and Others
 - 2 - Navigating Differences
 - 3 - Effective Communication
 - 4 - Friendship, Dating, and Love
 - 5 - Cultural Influences
 - 6 - Planning your Future
 - 7 - Committed Love and Marriage
 - 8 - Leadership and Job Readiness
 - 9 - Sexual Health

CATEGORY 3
The Implementation of the Curriculum

14. Secured at least minimal support from appropriate authorities such as ministries of health, school districts or community organizations.

REAL Essentials is in a variety of school, community and health settings. This suite of curricula is utilized in 44 states across the country with wide support from multiple partners, diverse population groups, community and government influencers and parents.

Not applicable for this category

**(TAC)
17 Characteristics**

**REAL Essentials
Advance Alignment**

**Aligned
Activities**

CATEGORY 3
The Implementation of the Curriculum

15. Selected educators with desired characteristics (whenever possible), trained them, and provided monitoring, supervision and support.

REAL Essentials Master Trainers train educators in a 16-hour, two-day certification seminar. Trainers walk educators through objectives, materials, and step by step instructions with modeling and interactive execution to ensure each facilitator leaves fully equipped and confident in their ability to implement the content. Additionally, online training resources and instructional videos are available for educators to have access to continued learning opportunities. Updates in the literature affects updates in the curricula. All updates are available on the Center for Relationship Education website for educators to have access to the most current and relevant curriculum content.

Not applicable for this category

16. If needed, implemented activities to recruit and retain youth and overcome barriers to their involvement (e.g., publicized the program, offered food or obtained consent).

REAL Essentials certifies educators / youth serving personnel who have access to students in a school-based setting or who are involved in collaborative community-based partnerships. Implementing programming in settings that have social supports, programming and services such as transportation vouchers and free and reduced lunch programs allow for the curriculum to be implemented in environments where students are already involved. REAL Essentials is designed to be implemented in high risk or under-resourced communities such as residential treatment centers, shelters, juvenile justice centers, and through foster care and kinship networks.

Not applicable for this category

17. Implemented virtually all activities with reasonable fidelity

REAL Essentials is designed with replicable and directive objectives as well as step-by- step instructions to ensure program fidelity and eliminate inconsistent messaging to program participants. The curriculum certification training dedicates one session of the training to implementation, service delivery, scope and sequence, attendance records, evaluation protocols, passion and fidelity. Master Trainers impart best practices for implementation and fidelity to content. Program authors reserve the right to revoke certification for any educators who do not follow teaching protocols.

Not applicable for this category